

Saipan Tribune

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INSIDE



Wine Retailer

Less than a month after relocating to Garapan, awards shop Topnotch reintroduces to Saipan special wines that relive the legacy of the former Cholee's wine store.

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RP Elections

Philippine film star Fernando Poe Jr. was firmly in race for the presidency Thursday after the Supreme Court rejected an effort to disqualify him over questions about his citizenship.

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New Robot

A Japanese company unveiled on Tuesday a prototype of a human-shaped walking robot it said will be mass produced for sale at \$4,600 by the end of the year.

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NMI's security plan 'rejected'

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

THE GOVERNATOR AND GOVERNOR MEETS

Gov. Juan N. Babauta poses with California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger during a break in the National Governors Association's Winter Meeting in Washington, D.C. The nation's governors gathered in Feb. 21-24 prepared to focus on critical state issues that will be considered by Congress during the upcoming session. The governors also met with President Bush and members of the cabinet as well as leaders from both the House and Senate.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has reportedly rejected the CNMI Homeland Security Strategic Plan that was prepared and submitted by a private consultant on behalf of the CNMI government in January 2004.

According to a ranking local government official who requested anonymity, the rejection of the strategic plan could result in the CNMI losing at least \$5 million in homeland security funding for fiscal year 2004 if it is not addressed at once.



At present, two ranking officials from the Office of Domestic Preparedness, an agency under the Homeland Security Department, are on Saipan reportedly to conduct its own assessment study to verify several aspects of the proposal submitted by the CNMI.

Gov. Juan N. Babauta, however, said the report was not rejected at all. He said it only needs "some changes" such as in the area of coordination between agencies.

"It's not a rejection. It's not to say that we would not get funding. No, that's not the case here. It [strategic plan] requires some changes to ensure greater

See NMI'S on Page 8

Regular Shanghai charter flights to open

An agreement has been finalized with China Southern Airlines to fly two weekly charter flights from Shanghai to Saipan beginning April 23, 2004, according to Michael Kwan, chairman of the board for the Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino.

The aircraft used will be a Boeing 757 with a seating capacity of 198 passengers for each flight.

"This is good news for the CNMI," Kwan said, "as it will bring an additional 15,000 visitors from China to the CNMI this year alone."

Once the Tinian International Airport is approved to handle outbound international passengers, the flights will go directly from Shanghai to Tinian, according to Kwan.

The Associated Press reported that in

2003 Shanghai's population swelled to more than 20 million people and the city boasted the highest per capita income among all cities in China. Shanghai's economic growth last year was even higher than the national average of 8 percent. This makes Shanghai a natural market to attract China's ever-growing traveling population.

See REGULAR on Page 8

Babauta maintains Atalig's DoF nomination

By MARIAN A. MARAYA
REPORTER

Gov. Juan N. Babauta yesterday expressed optimism that the Senate would confirm the nomination of Fermin Atalig as Finance secretary, despite an earlier statement by Senate President Joaquin G. Adriano opposing Atalig's appointment.

The chief executive, who recently returned from attending two congressional hearings in Washington D.C., said that he has not personally heard from Adriano about the matter.



Atalig

"All I can say is that when I nominated Secretary Fermin Atalig, I did so because I felt that he had done a great job at Commerce in promoting the CNMI on all the trade missions and all that.

"Finance being a department where we have seen a number of turnovers, I felt that I needed his experience and skills to give the department some kind of

See BABAUTA on Page 8

'Violence in schools becoming a concern'

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Education officials are "very concerned" about campus violence, which allegedly include student attacks against teachers and student fights.

In an interview, Board of Education chairman Roman C. Benavente acknowledged that BOE and Public School System officials have discussed and expressed great concern on the issue.

He, however, could not provide details about a particular incident.

See VIOLENCE on Page 8



Local

Babauta mum on Wright resignation

Gov. Juan N. Babauta yesterday declined to comment on the recent resignation of Kenneth Wright as Northern Marianas College president, citing the need to gather facts surrounding the issue.

The chief executive was in Washington D.C. to attend two separate hearings before U.S. Congress committees when Wright resigned from the college.

“I have not met with the board yet. And I don’t want to comment at this time, because I don’t know what the facts are. I will make a statement after meeting with the board,” he said yesterday.

Asked if Wright’s decision came as a surprise to him, Babauta said, “Yes and no. I

didn’t think this was going to happen so quickly. Again, I don’t know what the situation is.”

The NMC leadership then led by Wright and the Babauta administration have been working in partnership to push the Pacific Gateway Project to lure Asian students to NMC.

Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente, for his part, earlier lamented Wright’s decision to step down but assured that the administration’s support for the Gateway project continues.

“That project is of course something that the governor and I have fully endorsed and are committed to the point of providing the first initial funding.

[The administration is committed] to continuing to assist with the funding to improve the campus and the college.

“And we can either go back and look at the costs, which is tens of millions of dollars, to be able to build a new campus or purchase La Fiesta at a good deal like we have done and turn it into a college campus where it will have a better learning atmosphere than the present college condition,” Benavente told reporters last week.

He added that he looks forward to working with the BOR and the next NMC president in making the project a reality. *(Marian A. Maraya)*

‘Saipan betel nuts are fungus-free’

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

The betel nut fungus that has infected plantations on Guam has not found its way to Saipan.

After regular inspections of betel nut plantations on Saipan, agricultural expert Isidoro T. Cabrera said no symptoms of the bud rot disease has been found so far.

Cabrera, agricultural consultant to the Northern

Marianas College’s Cooperative Research, Extension & Education Service, said the fungus *Phytophthora meadii* causes the disease. The fungus thrives in rainy weather.

He said farmers should know how to detect the disease and ask the CREES for assistance when symptoms are spotted.

One of the symptoms of the disease is the development of dark spots on the leaf sheath, noted Cabrera. Another indication of an infected tree is when the leaf spear can be easily pulled out and has a rotten odor, he added.

“After the fungus infects a tree, it forms spores on infected tissue, and a cottony web-like growth on the edges of the dark spots. Spores are blown by wind and rain to surrounding areas, starting new infections, especially when trees are planted close together,” said Cabrera, citing information from the University of Guam.

In early January, hundreds of betel nut trees in Merizo, Guam

reported died due to the fast-spreading fungus. Guam farmers expressed fear that the betel nut industry could be wiped out if the spread of the fungus is not controlled.

Cabrera said the government of Guam has allowed the use of pesticide to exterminate the fungus. He said the Kocide 4-5LF could also be used on Saipan should the fungus reach its way to the island again. But he said the pesticide’s use would have to be allowed by the Division of Environmental Quality.

According to Cabrera, the fungus vanished from Saipan since 1998. In 1997, though, the fungus wiped out three betel nut plantations in As Lito, wiping out an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 trees. At that time, Cabrera said Saipan’s betel nut trees totaled about 60,000.

For additional inquiries about the fungus and the disease, Cabrera urged farmers to reach him at 234-5498 and 287-0571.

DOL resolves 42 workers’ complaints

The Department of Labor hearing office has allowed 21 nonresident workers to begin working immediately for their employer following the resolution of their work status in the CNMI.

In a recent administrative order, hearing officer Jerry Cody said the 21 complainants shall be entitled to work for respondents Fe and Juan Cabrera dba FC General Commercial Services immediately.

But Cody said that parties should first sign an approved conditional grant of transfer for each worker.

The respondents are also required to present proof of available projects sufficient to justify the workers’ employment.

The 42 included Elizabeth Austria, Michael Batallones, Leonora Bengco, Rito Doca, Esrelita Eliaris, Josefina Esquivel, Daniel Fernandez, Ana Rapunsel Flores Mariza Jimenez, Maria

Labarda, Yolly Laborce, Violeta Lapuz, Maria Lorenzo, Jessie Lostrino, Fortunato Mendez, Olivia Odon, Jessica Ortizo, Hermie Reformado, Erlinda Ruga, Gloria Sanchez, and Loedigria Sigua.

Cody also granted 19 other complainants relief to find new employers.

They are Caperlita Baysa, Anthony Buenaflor, Villardo Cascalla, Julius Dela Paz, Noemi Eugenio, Marilou Fantilanan, Guadalupe Gonzales, Girlie Guiao, Connel Isip, Miloflor Lazaro, Maribel Manalo, Marla Mateo, Eulalia Nimo, Leoniza Pamintuan, Norma Rubin, Marvin Sacro, Efren Sumilang, Gloria Titoy, and Ciriaco Viray.

Meantime, Cody approved the department’s request to remand the agency case against the respondents for further investigation of alleged violations noted in a Dec. 15 determination.

diabetes
+green

ptc-pic

GirlsScoutWeek proclaimed

Local Girls Scout troops and their leaders gathered at the Governor’s conference room yesterday to mark the start of another celebration in honor of the program that aims to develop self-esteem and leadership skills among girls.

During a signing ceremony yesterday afternoon, Gov. Juan N. Babauta pronounced March 7-13 as Girl Scout Week.

“As the young women of today grow into leadership roles for tomorrow, we recognize that the Girl Scouts play a major role in preparing for the challenges they will face in the future. We support you in your efforts and congratulate you on your many successes.

“I urge everyone to take part in the activities planned for Girl Scouts Week and to support the Girl Scouts in their cookie drives and other fundraising efforts to keep this important group focused on their mission of helping all young women in our community,” the governor told yesterday’s attendees.

Besides Girl Scout members, officials from the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs and the Youth Affairs Office were in the audience. *(Marian A. Maraya)*

DPH: Hospital requires urgent repair

Public Health Secretary James U. Hofschneider said that Commonwealth Health Center facilities are being pushed far beyond their limits, and some are at risk of system failure.

Hofschneider, in his testimony during a recent U.S. congressional hearing on CNMI’s health and medical concerns, noted that the CHC, the Commonwealth’s lone hospital, said urgent system upgrade and repair must be done “in order to continue to provide critical medical services.”

“Because of age, harsh temperatures, high relative humidity, rain and inclement weather like typhoons and tropical storms, CHC has been battered and beaten,” he said.

He said the department is most concerned about CHC’s leaking roofs and the deteriorated condition of certain critical equipment and systems such as heat ventilation, air conditioning, and boiler.

This came following recent reports made by three different groups: Casey Conner Engineering on facilities, SSFM Engineers on structural analysis, and the CNMI

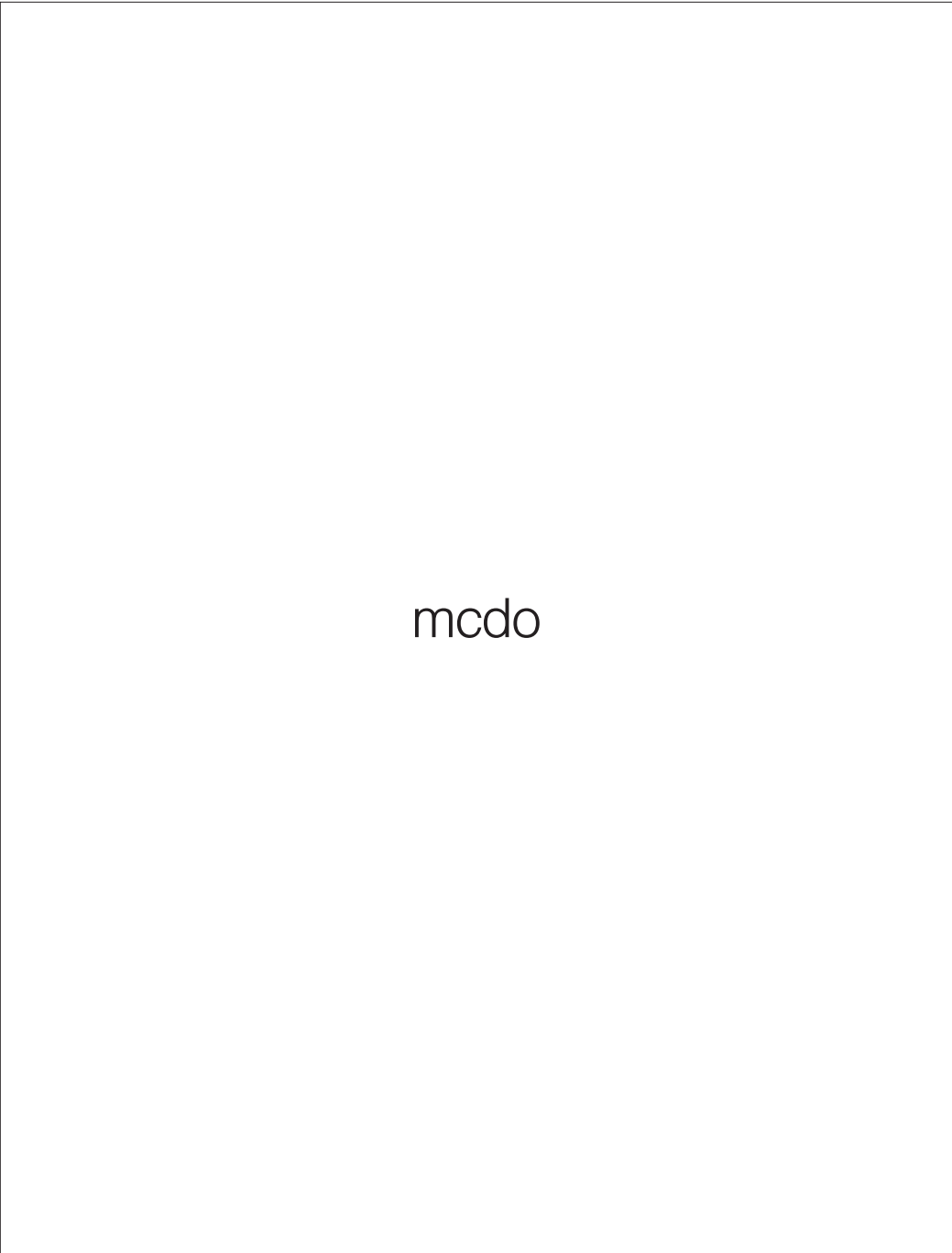
Energy Office on energy audit.

“All three reports were focused on different areas of CHC’s infrastructure but all resoundingly agreed on a common theme: to continue functioning over the next several years, the CHC must upgrade, repair/renovate, and harden its infrastructure and critical facilities,” the DPH secretary said.

He said the most critical needs are the upgrade of the water system and the ventilation or cooling systems.

The DPH said it needs \$3 million to upgrade the water system, including medical grade, potable water, rainwater catchment, fire suppression, and waste; and another \$3 million for ventilation and space cooling.

Over \$6 million is needed to replace the steam system, medical supply building, replacement of medical vacuum system, resurfacing of the roof, medical air, and parking design and construction. *(Liberty Dones)*





Jury selection cancelled

All prospective Jurors of Panel “XS” who were summoned to appear on March 8, 2004 at 8:30am in Courtroom 217A are informed that the jury selection has been cancelled until further notice. Those concerned need not appear on the said date.

KHS cultural day tomorrow

This is to inform the parents/legal guardians and the general public that Kagman High School will be having its Cultural Day tomorrow, March 6, from 9am to 3pm at school’s campus. You’re invited to join the Kagman High School community in celebrating Cultural Heritage Day.

Three-day commissary tent sale starts today

The Commissary is having a three-day tent sale at the Army Reserve Center starting today, from noon to 6pm, until Saturday and Sunday, 9am to 6pm.

MHS MY WAVE Club fund-raiser tomorrow

The Marianas Tourism Education Council wishes to inform everyone that the Marianas High School MY WAVE Club will be selling hot lunches from 10am to 2pm tomorrow, March 6, at the Civic Center in Susupe at \$5 each to raise funds for various tourism-related activities. The students will also be giving away 2004 MHS MY WAVE calendars for a minimum donation of \$5.

Environment prize seeks nominees

The Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes is seeking nominations for its 2004 awards. The Barron Prize recognizes young people ages 8 to 18 who have shown leadership and courage in public service to people and our planet. Half of each year’s winners are chosen for their work to protect the environment. Winners receive \$2,000 to support their service work or higher education.

Nomination deadline is April 30, 2004. For more information and to nominate, visit www.barronprize.org. Barbara Ann Richman Program Director Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes PO BOX 17 Boulder, CO 80306 (970) 875-1448 www.barronprize.org

OES PTSA meeting

The acting Principal of Oleai Elementary School would like to inform the parents and guardians of its students that the PTSA meeting will be on Tuesday, March 9, 2004, 6pm, at the school cafeteria. Everyone is encouraged to attend.

NMA fundraising set

The Northern Marianas Academy seniors are trying to raise funds for an upcoming trip to Cairns, Australia.

Their main fundraiser—originally to be held tomorrow, March 6, 2004—has been postponed and will now take place on Friday, March 12, 2004 at 5pm at the NMA campus.

“On behalf of the Northern Marianas Academy seniors we would like to apologize for any inconvenience and thank you for your understanding and support,” the class said in a statement.

1040 Form distribution set

The Division of Revenue and Taxation wishes to inform all CNMI residents that the distribution of the 2003 1040 forms and instruction has already begun. Those who would like to pick up a copy can drop by at the Office of the Division of Revenue and Taxation located at the DanDan Commercial Center from 8am to 4pm.

All residents are asked to pick up the forms during regular business hours. Please be reminded that the deadline for filing 2003 1040 is Thursday, April 15, 2004 at 12am (midnight).

Family Literacy meeting postponed

The Northern Marianas Family Literacy Consortium meeting will be held tomorrow, March 6, at 1pm. This will be held at the conference room of the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library.

Everyone is requested to e-mail their suggestions before March 6 to consortium secretaries Concepcion L. Van Der Veen at concepcionv@hotmail.com or to Thelma Cing at tcing@hotmail.com.

All public and privates schools, Parent Teacher Associations, agencies, groups or individuals who support family literacy in the CNMI are welcome to attend the meetings, join and/or collaborate with the NMFLC.

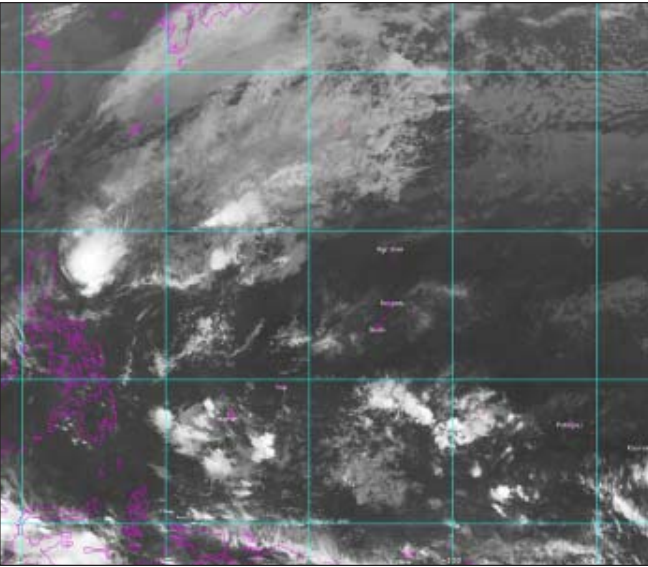
For more information, call Jonas Barcinas at 664-5025/6, fax 664-5035 or contact the new NMFLC public information officer, Adela Kapileo, at akapileo@vzpacifica.net.

DES raffle draw postponed to May

The Dandan Elementary School has postponed its 6th Annual Cultural Day Raffle Drawing and Festivities from Feb. 14 to May 22.

“We apologize for the inconvenience this has brought upon the parents and others who have made efforts to participate in this school function. On behalf of the administration, teachers, parents, students, and the PTA officers of their school community, we thank you for your understanding and continued support in every way possible,” said the school in a media statement.

WEATHER FORECAST



PICTURE TIME: 1:00 A.M., MARCH 4, 2004
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A near-equatorial trough extends from 4n130e eastward to eq150e. Convergent trade winds north of the trough are producing scattered showers southeast of Palau within 100 miles of a line from 8n136e to eq143e. Further east...trade-wind convergence is generating scattered showers near the Equator south of a line from 2n154e to eq165e... south of 3n from 167e to 176e...and north of Majuro between 10n and 12n from 166e to 175e. A cold front south of Japan is producing rain and showers up to 50 miles northwest of a line from 20n138e to 25n145e.

SAIPAN AND TINIAN
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 10-15 mph. Highs near 87. Lows near 75.

GUAM AND ROTA
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 10-15 mph. Highs near 86. Lows near 75.

PALAU
Mostly cloudy with scattered showers.
Winds: East at 10-15 kt.

POHNPEI
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15-20 kt.

YAP AND ULITHI
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 15 kt.

KOSRAE
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 20 kt.

CHUUK
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15-20 kt.

MAJURO
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 20 kt.

	CITY	FORECAST	HIGH	LOW
	Auckland	Sunny	63F (17C)	52F (11C)
	Beijing	Cloudy	42F (6C)	22F (-6C)
	Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	65F (18C)	54F (12C)
	Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	82F (28C)	69F (21C)
	London, England	Partly Cloudy	50F (10C)	38F (3C)
	Los Angeles	Sunny	69F (21C)	52F (11C)
	Manila	Partly Cloudy	91F (33C)	78F (26C)
	Melbourne	Sunny	85F (29C)	67F (19C)
	Miami	Sunny	82F (28C)	72F (22C)
	New York City	Cloudy	50F (10C)	46F (8C)
	Osaka	Partly Cloudy	44F (7C)	22F (-6C)
	Paris	Showers	46F (8C)	32F (0C)
	Pusan	Sunny	44F (7C)	30F (-1C)
	Rome	Partly Cloudy	51F (1C)	37F (3C)
	Salem, Oregon	Cloudy	54F (12C)	42F (6C)
	San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	62F (17C)	49F (9C)
	Seoul	Partly Cloudy	35F (2C)	25F (-4C)
	Tokyo, Japan	Rain	51F (11C)	35F (2C)
	Washington, DC	Cloudy	64F (18C)	39F (4C)

House members debate LB expansion

By **MARIAN A. MARAYA**
REPORTER

A Senate resolution to increase the Legislative Bureau’s full time employees from 35 to 45 was concurred by the House of Representatives yesterday, but not before a heated debate ensued among members.

Arguments raised by some lawmakers were rooted on doubts over the expansion’s aptness given the Legislature’s limited financial resources.

At the last minute, Minority Leader Heinz S. Hofschneider moved that the House enter into a committee as a whole to seek justification from LB Executive Director Walter Macaranas.

Macaranas affirmed before House members yesterday the need for more professional services, especially legal counsels for both the House and

the Senate. Responding to members’ queries, Macaranas confirmed that LB personnel have been receiving heavier workloads.

Hofschneider cautioned members to carefully consider the FTE expansion before voting on Senate Joint Resolution 14-4, reminding his colleagues that once the measure musters approval, both the House and the Senate would have no more say over the matter.

Although LB is part of the Legislature, the office is constitutionally an independent body that should be free from political harassment or pressure.

Macaranas identified at least five additional professional service positions that the Legislature needs to fill, including two legal counsels for the Senate and another two for the House.

Although SJR 14-4 allows for

45—or ten more from the original 35—FTEs for the LB, Macaranas said all the positions do not necessarily have to filled-up.

The LB official informed members that presently, the office has over \$200,000 earmarked for personnel and operations. LB plans to use part of this funding to develop ‘paperless sessions’ through the installation of computers in chambers to do away with clutter created by hard copies.

“We are just trying to address needs. There is a need... We want to provide services the best we can. We feel that by increasing professional services, we would be able to deliver [more efficient] services,” Macaranas said.

Education Committee Chairman Justo Quitugua shared his own frustrations over the need for more legal counsels to review and expedite the movement of bills.

Some House members were not sold on the idea of hiring deputy sergeant-at-arms and deputy clerks solely for Rota and Tinian, who would be tasked to assist in the once-a-month Senate sessions on the two islands. This, so that the LB would not have to deploy Saipan personnel to the two islands to facilitate the sessions.

Hofschneider took issue, however, on who would be supervising these new LB personnel on Tinian and Rota.

Macaranas assured that such issues are being taken under consideration and that discussions are still ongoing.

Commerce and Tourism Chairman Ray Yumul recommended that the LB look into hiring part-time employees to assist in the Rota and Tinian sessions, instead of employing them full-time.

“I am supportive of this

resolution but don’t abuse it. I want to emphasize that it should be professional services,” Vice Speaker Timothy P. Villagomez addressed Macaranas during yesterday’s discussions.

Meantime, Hofschneider also urged fellow members to reassess the services within their own offices instead of relying heavily on the LB.

The minority congressman said each member is budgeted to hire at least one professional services staff for his/her office.

“It is our responsibility as elected officials, given under the \$155,000 each. Let’s not put that on the safety box and not talk about it. Because that was the taxpayers’ agreement when they conferred it to the Legislature. Now we’re here focusing on the Bureau... We have to revisit ourselves, revisit our own offices, how we use the

\$155,000. Letters, memos being done by the Bureau. Resolutions our staff can manage. Drafting of legislation should be done initially by our offices, our staff. That’s the condition that the legislative initiative went through [in] giving us \$155,000,” said Hofschneider.

Rep. David Apatang disagreed with Hofschneider and offered his support behind the LB’s bid for more FTEs. “Thank you but I don’t need a lecture on how to spend my operational funds,” he told Hofschneider.

“Come on, let’s be honest, we need these people. We need additional people. The [House] clerk is understaffed, they have a lot of work to do... Let’s be honest, let’s support this resolution. He [Macaranas] is the director; he knows his responsibilities. So I’m supporting this resolution,” added Apatang.

AGO: CIP transfer to Army Corps legal

By **LIBERTY DONES**
REPORTER

The Attorney Generals Office said that the transfer of administration and funding of capital improvement projects to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is legal.

In an opinion released last month, Attorney General Pamela Brown and Assistant AG James R. Strump said the governor and the Department of Public Works have “appropriate authority to expend and obligate the funds appropriated for implementation of CIP’s in the CNMI.”

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. Board of Directors had questioned the authority of Gov. Juan N. Babauta to order the transfer of three CUC CIP’s to the Army Corps and whether this agreement with the Corps complies with proper procedures.

The projects involved the Rota water well drilling reservoir (\$705,000), Kagman sewer system (\$10 million), and new Tinian wastewater collection

system (\$5.6 million).

The AGO said these projects, which include local and federal funds, identified DPW as the expenditure authority, giving the department the ability to expend and obligate funds.

The transfer, the AGO said, “followed all applicable constitutional, statutory, and procurement regulations, and therefore was valid and proper.”

The government’s memorandum of agreement with the Army Corps was an inter-governmental agreement and, as such, was exempt from CNMI procurement regulations.

Further, the AGO cited that a separate MOA for the transfer was duly approved by the CUC executive director as the benefiting agency, the acting secretary of Finance for certification of funds, the DPW secretary as expenditure authority, the AG as to legal form and capacity, and the governor as chief executive officer.

Based on these, the AGO ruled that the transfer of the

projects complies with all financial and legal requirements.

“The actions of the governor in this matter were within his authority,” the AGO said.

As well, the AGO said the May 16, 2003 legal opinion by then CUC legal counsel Murphy Peterson, which declared the transfer of CIP’s as illegal, “is incorrect and should be disregarded.”

Peterson expressed opposition to the transfer, citing violation of federal agreement terms, the doctrine of separation of powers, and the board’s fiduciary duty.

Babauta ordered the transfer of the projects in March 2003 after being advised of a \$346,000 penalty being assessed against the CNMI for non-compliance with U.S. Internal Revenue Code requirements and of possible additional fines unless the CNMI spends its tax-free bond proceeds.

DEQ to administer water, wastewater operators’ exams

The Division of Environmental Quality said it would administer the water and wastewater operator’s examinations on March 25.

The examinations will be held at the Joeten Kiyu Public Library’s conference room. The DEQ is administering the exams in coordination with the Guam Environmental Protection Agency.

The DEQ urged operators of drinking water and wastewater facilities to obtain certification.

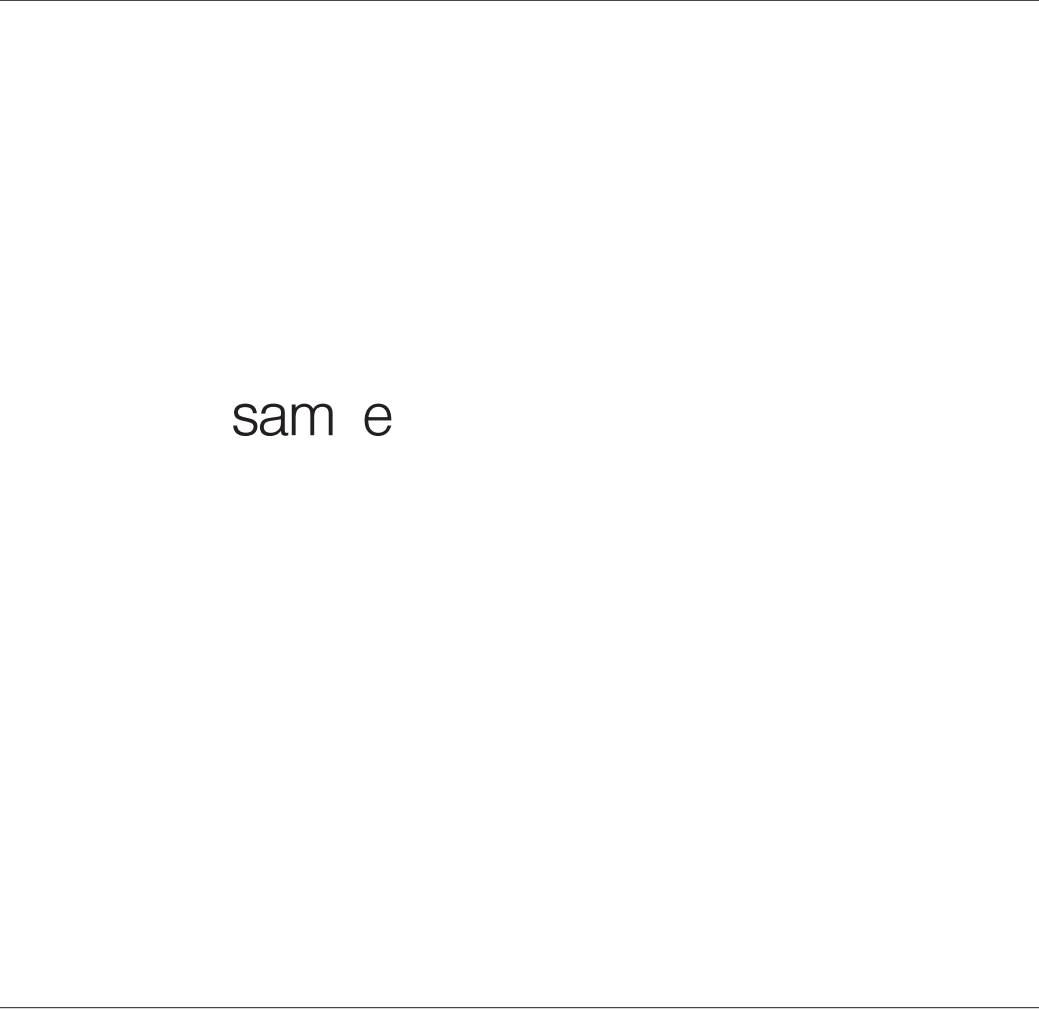
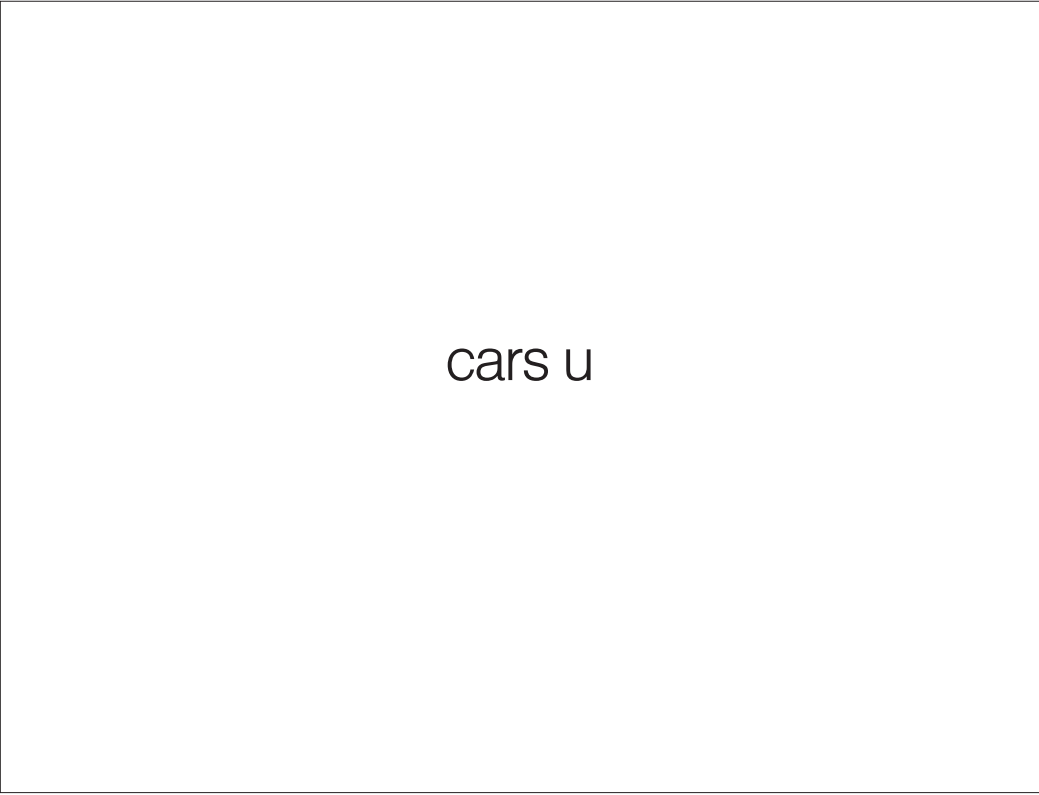
“As more operators get certified, their compliance with the safe drinking water regulations has significantly improved. We at DEQ encourage the owners and operators of any public water system to take the exam and learn what is expected of them as a public serving facility,” said Joe Kaipat, the DEQ’s Safe Drinking Water Branch manager.

Application forms are

available at the DEQ’s Saipan office located at the third floor of the Morgen building in San Jose. The deadline for submitting applications is on March 12 at 4pm. The DEQ reminded concerned parties to attach the required documents with their applications, which should also indicate the level of operator exams they intend to take.

A non-refundable \$15-fee will be collected for every application. Payments should be made in the form of check or money order payable to the Treasurer of Guam, according to the DEQ.

“Admission in the examination will not be permitted unless the applicant receives a confirmation letter to sit for the exam and that the required application fee is paid in full on/ or before March 18, 2004,” the DEQ said.



Opinion

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EDITORIAL

A chastened church

The scope of the criminality is staggering: more than 4,300 men accused of sexually abusing 10,667 children between 1950 and 2002. Fifty percent of the children were between the ages of 11 and 14, 27 percent between 8 and 10, and nearly 6 percent under age 7. Overall, 81 percent of the victims were boys and 19 percent were girls. The sexual offenders were not drawn from the ranks of convicted felons. They were men to whom the young and vulnerable victims turned for spiritual guidance and trusted leadership; the predators were Catholic priests.

The National Review Board, a lay body created by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, can be credited with producing this chilling description of the scope of the child sexual abuse problem in the Catholic Church. Thanks to the board's work, performed by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, much more is now known about the profiles of the priests and their accusers and the prevalence and distribution of the sexual abuse problem over the years. We also know more about the toll the crisis has taken on the church's treasury for the treatment of priests and for legal expenses: more than \$572 million, and that's not counting the total shelled out by the church for settlements and expenses incurred after parish surveys were returned to the John Jay College. But, given the nature and breadth of unlawful behavior, there are more questions that need to be answered.

The sexual abuse of children could not have gone on for so long without the indulgence of church leadership. Washington lawyer Robert Bennett, who served as research chairman of the National Review Board, said on NBC's "Meet the Press" last Sunday that "there are bishops who totally failed as pastors and as shepherds of their flocks." Mr. Bennett also said there was such a fear of the church's becoming engulfed in scandal that the bishops "planted the seeds long ago for the scandal that we are now facing." Too many bishops, Mr. Bennett said, "acted more like risk-assessment managers of an insurance company" and followed lawyerly advice that urged them to resist the victims of sexual abuse and to avoid admitting liability. As a result, some bishops paid hush money and, instead of removing sexual predators and reporting them to authorities, reassigned the offenders to other parishes. The National Review Board was not empowered to decide whether those church leaders would be punished or removed from office. But the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Catholic hierarchy ought not sidestep that question.

Similarly, the board's report stopped short of naming the 4,392 child sex abusers. Don't the laity and the community at large have a right to know if an abuser is still working with children, either as a priest or as a former priest? We think so. Speaking for himself, Mr. Bennett answers yes, unless the priest is deceased or if the allegations have no merit. Given this sordid story of victimization and abuse of a child's trust, we would think the Catholic Church would lean toward more transparency so that, as the archbishop of Washington, Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, said on "Meet the Press," people can "be confident that (the church is) not going to hurt them."

(c) 2004, The Washington Post



Education must adapt

By DARYL OGDEN
Special to Newsday

Here's the good news about American education: Now that we've marked the two-year anniversary of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), there is an emerging consensus about how to reform public education.

In addition to the core belief that every child is capable of learning and achieving at a high level, there is broad agreement about the inherent value of school accountability, the need for the professional development of teachers and the positive impact of robust parental involvement.

Now here's the bad news: Even if NCLB were fully implemented, our collective national grade for education reform would still be "Incomplete."

Simply put, the components of NCLB are necessary but insufficient to meet the steep educational challenges of the 21st century, where global competition and the advent of the "knowledge economy" characterize the present and the future.

This stark assessment is true even for our most well-funded, high-achieving school districts, but it is particularly true for poor districts, disproportionately comprised of minority students who often face difficult socioeconomic challenges that compromise their ability to earn even a high school diploma. And when we consider the U.S. Department of Labor's forecast that 70 percent of the 30 fastest-growing jobs between 1998 and 2008 will require an education beyond high school, we can see the vicious cycle in which our least fortunate students are trapped.

What follows is a partial lesson plan that can help turn our "Incomplete" into an "A."

Reinvent teaching: Many middle and high school teachers work within disciplinary silos, designing and delivering courses in isolation from one another that, not surprisingly, reap barren rewards. Bored high school students often describe themselves as biding their time until their "real" learning begins in college. By the time they graduate, many of these students are poorly prepared to succeed either in the work force or college.

By contrast, the nation's best middle and high schools have learned the value of innovative teaching and curricula. As Professor Tony Wagner of Harvard University's School of Education has

demonstrated, teachers in these schools engage students in dynamic environments that focus on the key learning objectives identified by employers and college professors alike, namely the ability to solve complex problems, communicate at a high level and employ practical math skills such as statistics, trend data and probability.

School administrators and department chairs must dedicate themselves to comprehensive collaborations as well as provide for the meaningful development of teachers and curricula; in turn, teachers must elect to reinvent themselves, embracing a rigorous yet fulfilling process where they are accountable to one another and to their students in unprecedented ways.

Reorganize high schools: The large, comprehensive American high school no longer works. Students consigned to low-performing, large high schools are often isolated among a large population of fellow students within massive, anonymous buildings. Compelling research by the Carnegie Corp. and the Gates Foundation, and a commitment by them to create or reorganize possibly 1,000 small schools as well as stunning achievement outcomes at schools like Manhattan's Central Park East Secondary, underscore the value of creating small high schools or, alternatively, small learning communities within larger high schools.

Think K-16: To transform American education, we must begin to prepare our students to set their sights on college from the very first day of kindergarten. My organization, Project Grad Roosevelt, provides one model of how this can be done. On a single Saturday morning in the fall, we gather hundreds of volunteers who fan out across our community to visit the homes of every kindergartner (as well as first and ninth graders) and win a commitment of future academic achievement. We honor that commitment by providing challenging curricula, the professional development of teachers, and caring tutors and mentors to help children learn at a high level and earn privately funded college scholarships.

Project Grad supports first-generation college students intent on forging a new life of opportunity. This support includes providing career counseling and mentoring—and calling on student success stories to reinvest in their home communities by becoming mentors themselves.

Ogden is executive director of Project GRAD Roosevelt, a nonprofit K-12 education reform organization. His book, "The Language of the Eyes," will be published this year.

Pink Nauru and easy green

Here is a crazy situation for you: Checks. Blank ones. In the mail. Coming in by the bushel full. Tens of thousands of dollars are showing up in everyone's mail box. I reckon we could buy the Nauru building with all the checks that keep pouring in. Then we'll paint the motha' pink. With gold trim. Yeah, buddy!

Oh, wait, can't do that. Most of us put these checks straight into the shredder. Are people throwing away free money? I told you, it's a crazy situation.

Whazzup with this check thing? Well, the U.S. has created a lot of money, oceans of the stuff, in order to keep interest rates down and to keep the economy from sinking into a sorry state. In other words, a big, fat money bubble is hiding all the real problems.

Money like that is cheap. That's why the dollar has been so weak; this didn't catch my readers or clients by surprise, since I'm the only economist involved in the region who predicts things before they happen, not after they happen. Talk about a cool job. Send kisses.

Anyway, with oceans of money sitting around, the moneylender boyz are trying to figure out how to turn a profit off the gig. The American mortgage and real estate market has been one famously active example. On this note, the CNMI doesn't have a free market in land, so unlike the U.S., it entirely missed out on the boom. Ah, such a precocious Commonwealth. Well, laugh it up, because if you owned land in, say, Arizona or California or North Carolina, instead

of Marpi or Chalan Kanoa, you might have made a lot (LOT) of money over the past few years. When I say a LOT, I mean, on an after-tax basis, more than you'll bank over next 10 or even 20 years slaving away at your miserable job. Oh well, not my problem, I've got miserable jobs of my own to worry about.

Anyway, there's so much money sloshing around in the American financial services industry that not even the bloated real estate bubble can soak it all up. So the moneylender boyz were looking for other places to put their cash. And some bright guy with a credit card company said "Aha! Instead of just sending that great and studly economist Ed Stephens Jr. some kisses...let's send all of our card holders free checks! Including Ed! We'll send them blank checks that draw on their credit card accounts!"

The suits liked the idea...because it is a very good idea. So they sent it down to the marketing boyz who scribed letters that would be sent out with the checks. "Dear cardholder...do you need an extra \$10,000 for a vacation? Or home improvements? Or an immigration attorney for your mistress? Based on your excellent history with us, we are pleased to enclose these checks. With a low interest rate of...."

The Director of Marketing took out the mistress part, Americans being sensitive about such things, but the great blank check mail-out campaign was underway, which includes the CNMI and every other nook of dollar-denominated earth.

By ED STEPHENS

Ed Stephens, Jr. is an economist and columnist for the Saipan Tribune. "Ed4Saipan@yahoo.com"



The Commonwealth isn't as much of a credit card culture as the U.S. is, but anyone who doesn't yet have a credit card and wants one should jump on this train before it leaves the station. Credit is easy to get now, but I assure you that this will change. Assuming you pay off the balance every month, a credit card is merely a transaction instrument that is better than cash. It's a lot easier to rent a car, buy an airline ticket, or score some goods over the Internet using fantastic plastic. In this regard credit is more liquid than cash...which makes sense given that *money itself is credit*...they are the *same exact thing*.

Anyway, keep stocking up on that pink paint. If enough of us get enough of these checks and the moon is full... forget the shredder...it's Nauru Building time. Bring brushes. And beer. Lots of beer.

Letters to the Editor

Saipan Tribune welcomes contributions. All letters intended for publication must include the writer's name, address and, if possible, fax or telephone number. Letters are edited for space, clarity and fairness.

A constitutional grammatical oversight

As a resident of Tinian and one of its most outspoken citizens, I feel compelled to give my take on the disagreement between the Commonwealth Election Commission represented by the Attorney General's Office and Tinian's leadership over the recent election to amend the Tinians Gaming Initiative (gaming law).

Last November, the Tinian citizens cast their vote in approval of the amendments by a resounding vote of 668 yes versus 157 no. This comes out to an 81 percent approval rate! I think the people of Tinian have spoken, don't you?

Even though, the amendments makes sense and even though over 80 percent of the voters approved the measure, the entire amendment and issuance of the election result has been halted over a disagreement of what a qualified voter is. As an avid researcher of our CNMI Constitution, I have come up with what I think is the most convincing evidence that the whole argument between the CEC and the Tinian leadership is only due to a grammatical error in the constitution. Therefore, the argument of what a qualified voter is should be substituted with a new argument of should the words 'votes cast by' be implied?

The section of the constitution in question is Article IX Sections 1 and 2. If you read those two sections you will find that the entire intent and wording are almost exactly the same grammatically and in sentence structure. For instance, section 1, describing the method of an Initiative and the other, section 2, describing the method of a Referendum. Throughout both sections, the constitution requires action by the voter in order for either the initiative or referendum to be enabled. For example, section 1(a) requires a CNMI initiative petition to be signed by at least 20 percent of the persons qualified to vote. The word signed requires an action by the voter. Section 1(a) continues to define the same signed action of a petition by the voter for a petition that is local.

Now take section 2(a), the referendum requirements. Section 2(a) requires the same action by the voter. The referendum petition shall be signed by at least 20 percent of the persons qualified to vote. Section 2(a) continues to define the same signed action of a referendum petition by the voter for a petition that is local. This same exact pattern is done in sections 1(d) and 2(d), with an obvious grammatical omission that I believe is only a simple typing mistake. Section 2(d) requires the same action by a voter but this time in the method of a cast vote instead of a signed petition. A referendum petition concerning a general law for the Commonwealth shall take effect if approved by a majority of the votes cast by persons qualified to vote in the Commonwealth. A referendum petition concerning a local law shall take effect if approved by a majority of the votes cast by persons from the senatorial district who are qualified to vote. Now for both methods, just like in the petition, the constitution requires an action by the voter. In sections 1(a) and 2(a) for both a local and CNMI wide issue the constitution requires the voter to sign a petition. This exact pattern repeats itself in the section above by requiring the voter to cast his vote for a local or CNMI referendum. The problem with the constitution is that the pattern is interrupted by an obvious grammatical typo. See below, and notice how uncannily similar the wording is to the referendum section above: "An initiative petition that proposes a general law for the Commonwealth shall become law if approved by two-thirds of the votes cast by persons qualified to vote in the Commonwealth. An initiative petition that proposes a local law shall become law if approved by two-thirds of the (words votes cast by left out) persons from the senatorial district who are qualified to vote."

My suggestion is that the words 'votes cast by' were inadvertently left out by mistake and was not caught by anyone. The pattern of the sections are so similar that it is almost inconceivable that the words

were left out without so much of a hint as to why. As a matter of fact, the words 'votes cast by' fit perfectly into the sentence with ease.

In essence, if the intent was truly to leave out the words 'votes cast by' for a local initiative, then why is this not discussed in any of the Con-con minutes? Why is it not referred to in great detail in the constitution? And above all, why isn't the sentence structure different? It seems more reasonable, especially with the grammatical patterned evidence presented, that it was just an oversight or typing error. I hope the Attorney General's Office and the Commonwealth Election Commission can see the pattern as well.

After all, what is the big deal? 81 percent of the people who cast their vote agreed with the initiative amendment. Are we honestly saying that a person at home can affect the outcome of an election? Isn't this usurping my civic right as a voter? How can someone's inaction in the civic voting process be equal to my action of casting my vote? After all, that person can gain the same outcome if he comes to the poll station, take a ballot and then place it in unfilled in the box. At least, then his vote is cast, even though he did not fill in the ballot. At least that action is equal to mine. But to make someone NOT involved in the civic duty of voting have an equal say in the outcome of those of us who take that civic duty seriously is unfair and wrong. I ask the CEC and AGs Office to do the right thing. Side with the grammatical consistency of the constitution. Side with the constitutional pattern of the constitution that requires an action by the voter. Side with what the common person would be more inclined to believe when presented with the facts above. Side with the 81 percent of the Tinian citizens who chose to cast our vote. Side with the intent of the constitution.

Phillip Mendiola-Long

San Jose, Tinian

Blame your party

I'm writing this letter because its time to put the blame where it belongs in our Legislature. It seems we are at another "impasse" in the Legislature between the majority and minority representatives. The many confrontations based on majority vs. minority status between Senators and Representatives have hampered the progress of government on a regular basis for years. The focus of these disagreements has always been on the injustices of the majority and the application of the rules. I'm sure that everyone in the CNMI is aware of Judge Govendo's admonition for the Senate to "learn to follow your own rules." The same statement applies to the Lower House of Representatives. The blame for these disagreements and work stoppages has always gone back and forth but never got a definitive resolution because it resurfaces each time we have an election.

Gentlemen, you need to stop blaming the majority, and start blaming your party for it's poor showing in the election that made you a minority. I fully understand your predicament as the minority and I am sympathetic to your situation but work stoppages and refusing

to participate in committees and the process for solutions is really a violation of the promise you made when you took the oath of office. Please go back and read it if you don't remember what you said.

Regardless of who the majority or minority is, there is always disagreements about matters. So if you look at history, both parties have been guilty at one time or another of being unfair—well, that's politics and no one should be a politician if they can't take what you dish out when they were in the majority. Now we have a third party that has come to power, adding to the dynamics and increasing the potential for confrontation. The people you work for gentlemen don't care if you are in the majority or in the minority. The people I have talked with want results and not stall tactics and refusing to work. It is the hope of many citizens that you will accept your roles as part of the minority and do the very best you can. You will be judged by your "deeds" and not your ability to be a hold out and you can't get anything done if you are not part of the process.

The two dominant political parties of the CNMI have been weakened by the creation of other parties. It is becoming very obvious that some of

the problems that were once "party related" have now become government issues affecting the productivity of the Legislature. It is the hope of many that our distinguished leaders accept their role as the minority and focus on the necessary laws and the quality of the laws that are being produced. The quality of your work will far outweigh your refusal to be part of the process and the solutions for the people you work for. The perception that is being created by the minority is the very thing that caused you to become a minority and we won't have to guess about the results of the next election given what happened in the past election. You are only making the other party stronger. I'm sure the minority members have good reasons for their behavior but in the U.S. Congress party lines are always crossed for the greater good, so put the blame on your party, accept your role and move ahead with the business of the Commonwealth and not your party. The people elected you, not your party. One people, one direction.

Ambrose M. Bennett

Kagman High School

TSA waits for airline to confirm flights before federalizing West Tinian airport

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

The Transportation Security Administration-Saipan Office is still waiting for the China Southern Airlines’

DEQ cites 22 firms on lead monitoring

The Division of Environmental Quality has cited 22 establishments for their failure to monitor for lead and copper contaminants in their drinking water.

The establishments include two water companies, hotels and other private companies.

DEQ director John I. Castro Jr. directed the establishments to perform the required sampling from tap water as soon as possible, imposing a deadline on April 20.

Castro said the establishments face monetary fines if they fail to correct their violations, which pertain to the compliance period covering July to December 2003.

The water companies include Tinian Crystal Clear and Aqua De Vie. Also cited were the Tinian Dynasty Hotel & Casino, Saipan World Resort, Micro Beach Hotel, Plumeria Resort, Saipan Gold Beach, Riviera Resort Hotel, Paradise Hotel, Transasia, Hilltop Condominium, REM International, UMDA Barracks, Gold Barron Barracks, US CNMI Barracks, Paradise Apartment, Dai-Ichi Hotel South Barracks, East West Rental, SWIP Corp., and Sablan Enterprise in San Jose, Chalan Piao and Chalan Kanoa. (*John Ravelo*)

confirmation of its regular air service to the West Tinian International Airport before taking over security operations at the airport.

TSA-Saipan Customer Support and Quality Improvement Manager Viola Sablan said the federal agency has to ensure that certain security measures are in place and that China Southern Airlines has concurred with their flight service to Tinian before the TSA can move forward with its plan of federalization.

In a response to a question by Tinian Sen. Joaquin Adriano, Viola stressed the commitment of the TSA in ensuring that all necessary requirements are complied with, along with the needed

security measures at the West Tinian International Airport.

“We are working diligently with the Commonwealth Ports Authority to address issues that pertain to regulatory matters. This is just one of the requirements needed before we can federalize the West Tinian International Airport. Also, we are still waiting for information from the China Southern Airlines to ensure that certain measures are in place,” the manager explained.

She added that once all of the necessary requirements are satisfied and approved, TSA-Saipan would move forward with its plans of federalization.

Viola was responding to inquiries by the Tinian senator pertaining to the

deployment of federal screeners to the West Tinian International Airport now that the China Southern Airlines would proceed with its bi-weekly direct air service from Guangzhou, China.

Earlier, the CPA confirmed that West Tinian International Airport is expected to have its first direct air service this month when China Southern Airlines starts flying nonstop from Guangzhou, China.

As a result of the scheduled direct air service, the TSA-Saipan Office will begin fielding federal screeners to check on the arriving and departing passengers as part of its overall effort to keep all U.S. airports in compliance with Department of Homeland Security procedures.

Woman convicted in bank fraud case

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

The U.S. District Court yesterday convicted a woman on a charge of bank fraud for unlawfully obtaining over \$35,680 from the First Hawaiian Bank.

Chief Judge Alex R. Munson set the sentencing for Rosalina Marie Tudela Gabutin on June 15.

Munson allowed Gabutin’s release on an unsecured \$10,000-bond upon the recommendation of U.S. prosecutor Patrick Smith.

Smith filed the criminal information in court yesterday. On the same day, he and Gabutin, who was assisted by lawyer Perry Inos, filed a plea

agreement wherein the defendant owned up to the charge.

In the agreement, Gabutin agreed to pay the bank some \$35,680.75 and MKI Air Conditioning and Refrigeration some \$20,000.

Criminal charges arising from Gabutin’s actions have also been pending at the CNMI Superior Court.

Sometime last year, MKI’s owner Michael W. Kennedy filed a civil action against Gabutin in federal court, accusing the woman of forging company checks worth over \$360,000.

As administrative assistant for MKI, Gabutin used to prepare checks for Kennedy’s signature, update and maintain account balances, and prepare payable and

receivable accounts, according to Kennedy’s lawyer, Mark K. Williams.

From June 8 to Nov. 20, 2001, Williams said Gabutin prepared several checks drawn from MKI’s bank accounts with the First Hawaiian Bank. The lawyer said the checks were to be issued to different payees.

“Defendant [Gabutin] then forged the signature on those checks, such that they appeared to have been signed by the payee and/or by an authorized signatory of MKI and brought them to First Hawaiian Bank for check cashing,” said Williams.

The lawyer said Gabutin unlawfully converted the checks into cash for her own use, with the money reaching at least \$363,852.10.

NMI’S

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coordination among agencies,” he said.

The over-400 pages strategic plan was prepared by the Federated Sector Enterprises, whose managing partner is Danny Aranza. FSE had initially signed a \$200,000-contract with the CNMI government to tap into some \$4.5 million federal grant. A contract amendment, which increased the amount to \$400,000, allowed FSE to handle the assessment report preparation.

On Saipan right now are ODP Program Manager Tali Wenger and the accountant for the ODP comptroller. The two arrived on island reportedly to conduct their own assessment following the reported rejection of the CNMI strategic study.

Emergency Management Office director Rudolfo Pua denied any knowledge when asked about the alleged rejection of the strategic plan. He confirmed, though, that ODP officials are on-island, partly to audit the homeland security grants totaling some \$4 million.

“They are here to check on how

we’re doing on the...status of federal accounts,” Pua said. “They’re doing auditing.”

Pua later added that the ODP mission is “not really audit but to check how we obligate ODP funds starting from the inception of the agency in fiscal year 2002 to date.”

He denied that the ODP is conducting the fiscal check due to unaccounted funds, adding that the mission is part of ODP’s routine.

The CNMI received \$3.9 million in fiscal year 2003 to procure first-responder equipment that would be used to deter, investigate, and respond to terror attacks.

The source maintained that all agencies under the local Homeland Security Department were notified of the rejection of the project. In fact, the source said, all agencies were aghast at the decision.

“If the strategic study is not approved, the CNMI would be losing its fiscal year funding assistance from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and that would mean no money for security equipment needed for anti-mass weapons of destruction,” said the official.

The CNMI has been allocated \$5.865 million, which would be released as a grant award from the Office of Domestic Preparedness once the CNMI’s homeland security strategy is approved. The CNMI should get its significant federal funding especially by April or May 2004.

If approved, the CNMI would be in a stronger position to access a wide variety of homeland security programs from the Department of Homeland Security, the Transportation Security Administration, the Department of Energy, the Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Health and Human Services, among others.

The source explained that the ODP officials are here to help the CNMI on its strategic plan since it was not accepted in Washington D.C. Also, the source stressed that the ongoing inquiry include the off-island trips made by the local Homeland Security Department in the previous fiscal years.

“What are the equipments procured from the \$3.9 million funding? Where did the money go? These are the

questions that the ODP officials are trying to find out. Somebody is messing up there [local homeland security department],” the source stated.

Babauta had submitted the homeland security strategy to the Office of Domestic Preparedness, Department of Homeland Security, in Washington D.C. on Jan. 30, 2004. The regulatory deadline was Jan. 31.

The study provides hard data on the CNMI’s current capabilities and future requirements to respond to the potential catastrophic effects from the use of weapons of mass destruction.

“It provides a solid technical justification for the CNMI’s eligibility to receive potentially tens of millions in federal financial assistance over the next several years. Above and beyond access to significant revenue streams, the strategy will provide an additional foundation to our long-term economic recovery and diversifications by making the CNMI a safer and more secure area not only for our residents but also for potential future business and military investments in our islands,” Babauta earlier said regarding the strategic plan of the CNMI. (*With John Ravelo and Liberty Dones*)

The board chair called on the entire community, especially the parents, to help solve violence on campus.

“This is a community problem. Schools can’t solve it by themselves so we need parents and the whole community to address this,” he said.

He encouraged parents to talk constantly with their children at home about good behavior and proper values.

BABAUTA

From Page 1

stability and continuity. So that’s really why I nominated him to become the secretary,” Babauta said in an interview.

The governor is hoping to meet with Adriano soon to find out first-hand about the Tinian senator’s concerns over Atalig.

“I hope that the Senate would confirm him [Atalig]. And I hope that I can have the opportunity to meet with the president and find out what his concerns are; and see if I can help him with some of the concerns that he may have,” said Babauta.

Adriano on Monday disclosed plans to ask for the withdrawal of Atalig as Finance chief amid reports that the appointee still has arrears to settle with the Marianas Public Lands Authority.

Atalig, when reached for comment, had asserted that “I am trying my best to catch up with my obligation.”

MPLA board chairwoman Ana Demapan-Castro backed Atalig, saying the Finance secretary-designate has been making regular payments of about \$600 per month to the agency.

MPLA Commissioner Henry S. Hofschneider had confirmed that Atalig owes the agency some \$36,350.80 as of Feb. 26, 2004. The amount represents the balance that Atalig, as then Marianas Public Lands Corp. board member, incurred when he used an MPLC-issued corporate credit card “for personal purchases.”

In justifying his position, Adriano said yesterday that the Department of Finance portfolio is a critical position that should be held to the highest standards.

“He’s out of the picture, for me. I am not supporting Fermin [Atalig] to be the secretary of Finance at all. And I plan to ask my chairman on the [EAGI] committee to make a recommendation and perhaps bring him back to the Commerce and [let him] stay there,” the senate president had said.

As of February 27, 2004, Demapan-Castro told the Senate that Atalig has paid a total of \$20,000.

She further explained that an MPLA board action almost two years ago approved a recommendation to restructure Atalig’s account, upon the latter’s request.

“Because the Board approved the staff’s recommendation to restructure the account, the payment terms of the 1996 Promissory Note are effectively replaced,” said the chairwoman.

She continued that there was also an agreement two years ago to negotiate for an alternative collateral in order to reduce the interest charge and to secure Atalig’s account.

REGULAR

From Page 1

The twice-weekly flights from Shanghai to Saipan will depart at 9pm local time every Monday and Friday and arrive 3:30am local time every Tuesday and Saturday morning.

Lt. Gov. Diego Benavente will speak at a press conference to be held at a travel agents’ seminar in Shanghai on March 5th. He is expected to tell the travel agents about the new flight service and extol the virtues of the CNMI as a tourist destination.

Once Approved Destination Status is granted to the CNMI, MVA can begin aggressive marketing plans in Shanghai and other large cities in China.

VIOLENCE

From Page 1

When asked about an alleged stabbing incident by a student against a teacher, the board chair said, “I could not confirm or deny that.”

He noted, though, that he heard about a teacher fighting with a student who had wanted to attack the teacher. “I heard that

story but I have yet to confirm it.”

Unconfirmed reports have it that a PSS student, armed with a knife, allegedly stabbed his teacher in the leg.

Education commissioner Rita H. Inos was not available for comments when reached repeatedly.

Meantime, Benavente, who had a meeting with Inos yesterday morning on funding issues, said that, due to lack of

budget, PSS could not adequately provide its campuses—especially middle and high schools—with enough paraprofessionals to monitor student activities.

He said that middle and high schools do keep a parapro each but “it’s not enough because we just have too many students.” A parapro is a person hired to monitor student activities on campus outside the classrooms.

US lawmaker backs NMI delegate bid

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

The Northern Marianas’ effort to get a nonvoting delegate status to the U.S. Congress has obtained backing from U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall, who openly supported the bid of Resident



Rep. Pete A. Tenorio during the oversight hearing last week. Rahall, a member of the Resource Committee that conducted the hearing, expressed his support for a nonvoting delegate from the Northern Marianas to the U.S. House of Representatives.

“I believe it [nonvoting delegate] to be a fundamental tenet of our republican form of government. As members of Congress, representing our respective districts is a privilege granted to us by our constituents. The right for them to be represented lies in democracy,” said Rahall in a statement during the hearing. “I am pleased that throughout this Congress we have been able to work together on issues affecting Pacific areas under the jurisdiction of our committee.”

The hearing examined the potential for the establishment of a nonvoting delegate from the CNMI to the U.S. Congress.

Rahall said that in 1996, the Resource Committee made two attempts at passing legislation to create a CNMI nonvoting delegate office. The first failed and the second succeeded but without further consideration by the House.

The congressman said that, although no hearing was held on the two previous proposals, Congress continued to monitor the progress of the Northern Marianas’ immigration and labor issues.

Rahall also acknowledged Gov. Juan N. Babauta’s effort to bring changes to the CNMI and to repair the CNMI’s relationship with Congress.

“I am aware that there has been significant reform under your leadership. And most recently, the garment association has joined you in opposition to lifting the moratorium on guest workers, which was initially enacted locally in response to concerns from Congress,” he added.

Present at the oversight hearing were Chairman Richard Pombo (R-California), Madeleine Bordallo (D-Guam), Donna Christensen (D-US Virgin Islands), Jeff Flake (R-Arizona), Dennis Rehberg (R-Montana), George Miller (D-

California), and Joe Baca (D-California).

Their questions focused on the economic and social benefits a delegate would bring to the CNMI. Members applauded recent CNMI policies regarding immigration and labor, yet they expressed concern that these

policies may be reversed by future local administrations.

Aside from Rahall, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Interior David Cohen also threw his support behind the CNMI’s bid, along with insular affairs expert Ruth Van Cleve, former Director of the Office of

Territorial and International Affairs at the U.S. Department of Interior.

Van Cleve said that a CNMI nonvoting delegate in the House would be a “win-win” not only for the House but for Congress as a whole.

Bordallo, in a written

statement, said the hearing was a good first step toward resolving the issue, and thanked Pombo.

Bordallo said a bill has not been introduced to create a delegate’s seat for the CNMI, but said she will work with Pombo to move the issue forward.

The Commonwealth first requested a non-voting delegate’s seat three decades ago.

Pombo was in the Marianas region in January 2004, together with other members of the U.S. Congress, to see for himself the current state of affairs in the insular areas.

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TSA aid in improving locals' scores sought

With the goal to increase the number of local workers at the Transportation Security Administration, Senate President Joaquin G. Adriano has sought the assistance of Federal Security Director John Peoples in establishing a program geared toward improving CNMI applicants' performance on the TSA entrance test.

TSA, during a recent meeting with Senate members, reportedly expressed willingness to accommodate the CNMI in this effort.

Viola Sablan, TSA Customer Support and Quality Improvement Manager, informed Adriano about an internship program that TSA is planning to

initiate with universities and colleges across the country.

"The program is quite in depth but some benefits would be to work with the interns and have access with their performance and future hiring potential for DHS [Department of Homeland Security] or TSA," explained Sablan in a letter addressed to Adriano.

She, however, warned that not everyone participating in the program would be guaranteed employment with TSA.

"The goal is to have the independent group that does the hiring and processing for DHS

and TSA called Accenture to take the internship into account and consider any recommendations that we may have for the truly exceptional people," Sablan said.

The TSA official vowed to update the Senate with more information on the program when it becomes available.

Adriano recognized the need to better prepare local residents to take what he described as the tough TSA entrance examination, recommending that a trade school program in partnership with the Northern Marianas College be established. *(Marian A. Maraya)*



Adriano



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

HANMI DONATION

The Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands donated \$1,000 to the American Red Cross. The amount was part of funds raised from the association's charity golf tournament. HANMI will be holding its third tourney on April 3, 2004. Ed Salas chairs the association's golf tournament committee. Picture shows American Red Cross director Kyle Calabrese, American Red Cross executive director John I. Hirsh, American Red Cross director Sherry Tenorio, Salas, HANMI chair Ronald Sablan, and B.K. Park, HANMI vice chairman.

CUC sets power outage tomorrow

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. is scheduling a power outage tomorrow, March 6, from 7am-5:30pm on Feeder 2.

The following areas will experience momentary interruption due to load transfer: Army Reserve Compound, Sewer Lift Station, American Memorial Park, Hotel Street Garapan, Along Beach Road from Garapan to San Jose Microl Traffic Light, Price Costco and

Hollywood Movie House.

Areas affected from this outage include Charlie Dock (Boating Safety), Mobil Bulk Plant, Shell Bulk Plant, Kaiser Cement Factory, Saipan Stevedore and CPA areas.

No traffic lights will be affected.

The scheduled outage is needed to continue and complete replacement of the rusty/corroded structure (cross

arms, insulators, guying, connectors, bolts and nuts) and re-conductor of Feeder 2 at about 10 span of primary.

Because of the extreme danger in working on energized lines, a power outage is necessary to ensure the line crew's safety.

"CUC requests the cooperation and patience from people driving and residing in these areas while the work is completed," the agency said in a statement.



Stabbing suspect arrested

Authorities have arrested the suspect in the Garapan stabbing incident that happened Tuesday night within the Upper MIHA area, following the release of a warrant against the suspect.

Police department spokesperson Sgt. Tom Blas Jr. said that Oncho A. Alafonso, 20, gave himself up to Criminal Investigation Bureau operatives when he was served the warrant at his family residence.

Blas said Alafonso was cooperative and complied with the arrest. He was immediately brought to the Adult Correctional Facility where he was booked and detained.

Alafonso is being held on a \$50,000 bail. He was charged with aggravated assault and battery, multiple counts of assault with a dangerous weapon and assault and battery.

According to earlier reports, Alafonso abetted a 16-year-old minor during a scuffle in Garapan by stabbing the victim, Jasen Ada.

The incident happened on Feb. 22 when the two suspects allegedly ganged up on the victim in Central Garapan. The victim was wounded during the fight. *(Edith G. Alejandro)*

Jet skis crash in Saipan lagoon

Authorities rushed to Saipan waters Tuesday afternoon after two jet skis crashed in the lagoon. No one was injured in the said incident.

Police department spokesperson Sgt. Tom Blas Jr. said around 6pm Tuesday, the Boating Safety Section deployed a team of officers to the beach side of the World Resort Hotel after receiving a call about a jet ski collision.

According to the report, two tourists, Ryu Maeda, 18, and Tomohiro Tamaki, 18, rented a jet ski from the Island Marine Sports concession. After renting the equipment, jet ski operator Alfred Muna guided the tourists to the jet ski course.

As Muna came to the first buoy, he slowed down but when the customers approached the same location, the tourist accidentally sped up and collided with Muna's jet ski.

The guide avoided injuries by jumping off his jet ski. The two jet skis sustained moderate damage but no one was injured in the mishap. *(Edith G. Alejandro)*

guangdong

abra

dial rent

NMI to celebrate Int'l Women's Day

The entire Commonwealth will be observing the 16th Annual CNMI International Women's Day tomorrow, Saturday, with the theme "Uniting Women Through Our Ethnicity."

The celebration will be held at the Minachom Atdao Pavilion and will be from 9am to 3pm.

The program for the day's event includes cultural exhibits and traditional cuisines.

Cultural entertainment will be provided by the following ethnic groups: Hawaiian Community, Palauan Community, United Filipino Association, Thailand Group, Pohnpeian Association, Isa Dancers, and Tausala Ole Pacifica-Samoan Dancers. There will also be a cultural song by the Japanese Society.

The event is being promoted as a forum bringing together women from different cultures to share their cultural values, traditional dances, song and food.

The event and activities, sponsored by CNMI Office of Women's Affairs and the Office of the Governor, are free so everyone is invited.

For more information, call the WAO at 664-2294 or 664-2295.

Legislators 'walk the talk' at community walks

In recognition of March Nutrition Month, legislators are doing more than just talking about health issues on the House or Senate floor; some lawmakers are recruiting constituents to join them throughout the month at daily Community Walks.

The Commonwealth Diabetes Coalition said its March "Walk the Talk" Community Walks in various villages is supported by volunteer legislators who are "going the extra mile" to help the families take better care of themselves.

"We're very happy to be working with legislators who recognize the value of regular exercise," said Diabetes Coalition volunteer Robert Torres. "As we

'Walk the Talk' this month, we hope everyone will be inspired to join a Community Walk in their village or take up some other form of exercise."

Community Walks are held Monday through Friday from 5-6 pm. The 1.5-mile Community Walk course in Dandan starts across from Continental Cargo at the Saipan International Airport to the air traffic control tower and back. Kagman's new course is a scenic route beginning at the Kagman Community Center, past the tree-lined Laulau Golf Resort and back. A walk for the northern community of Saipan is also being organized.

"Age and weight contribute to the onset of diabetes, and exercise can reduce your risk," said Rep. Joseph Deleon Guerrero, who is also a diabetic. "I'm 'walking the talk' to encourage other people to adopt a healthier lifestyle. I walk with my wife so it's also a great time to talk one-on-one and have personal time together."

Supporting legislators include Deleon Guerrero, House Speaker Benigno R. Fitial, Vice-Speaker Timothy Villagomez, and Rep. Clyde Norita.

The mission of the Commonwealth Diabetes Coalition is to act as an advocate for public education and outreach in the CNMI community. The Coalition's primary role is to increase community awareness of the serious impact of diabetes on families, social structure, economy and people.

A Community Wellness Fair is also being planned for Saturday, March 20, 2004, from 8am.to 12 noon at Kagman Elementary School.

To help start a Community Walk in your neighborhood or for more information about the Commonwealth Diabetes Coalition, contact Diabetes Coalition volunteer Robert Torres at 670-233-7859 or rttlaw@vzpacifica.net or Ayuda Network Executive Director Konrad Reyes at 670-664-7469 or ayudanet@vzpacifica.net.

The Commonwealth Diabetes Coalition is a division of the Ayuda Network Inc., a non-profit corporation.

JOETEN
+BLUE

Business

Topnotch expands to wine retail in Garapan

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

Less than a month after relocating to Garapan, awards shop Topnotch reintroduces to Saipan special wines that relive the legacy of the former Cholee’s wine store.

“The wines are here,” said Topnotch owner Maro De la Torre. Vin Du Tonneau, Blue Nun and Berliner Schnapps-Peach are just some of the brands on Topnotch’s wine racks. Topnotch carries wine brands from France, Germany and Chile.

De la Torre said she is currently researching on sourcing rare organic wines that do not contain sulfite additives.

De la Torre relocated Topnotch from Finasisu to the heart of Garapan to give way to the company’s expansion that includes wine retail.

She said she wanted to continue the legacy of business couple Gary and Lam Baldwin, the owners of the former Cholee’s wine shop in Garapan Square, who relocated to Hong Kong earlier this year. She said the Baldwins operated Cholee’s for two years and attracted regular patrons, including lawyers and doctors.

De la Torre met the Baldwins by chance, jotting down the couple’s contact information that was being



JOHN RAVELO

Topnotch owner Maro De la Torre says she wants to continue the legacy of the former Cholee’s wine store in Garapan Square by expanding her business operations to include wine retail. Photo shows Bong De la Torre holding a bottle of wine.

announced by a radio station when they were having a garage sale.

Out of curiosity, De la Torre said she met the Baldwins in the latter’s former home in Kagman. With her keen eye for opportunities, De la Torre found out that she could engage in wine retail on the island.

“They [Baldwins] felt bad that they got customers who love their wines but can’t avail of the products anymore once they leave Saipan,” she said.

“That’s the main reason why I moved

here in Garapan,” said de la Torre, who vowed to continue the legacy Cholee’s had left on-island. “The awards shop will also be accessible to customers.”

Besides, she said wines are associated with celebrations and awards.

Topnotch is located adjacent to the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.’s payment office in Garapan, or just across the Elegance Café. Open daily from 9am to 8pm, Topnotch’s staff include Bong De la Torre and Elizabeth Formentera. Topnotch’s new telefax is (670)2332200.

Judge rejects motion by Kazaa owners

SYDNEY, Australia (AP)—A Federal Court judge Thursday rejected an application by Kazaa’s owners that would have excluded evidence seized in a series of court-sanctioned raids last month from use in legal proceedings aimed at shutting down the file-swapping giant.

“Today is a total victory for the copyright owners,” declared Michael Speck, a former police detective who is now general manager of Music Industry Piracy Investigations, a group major Australian record labels established to target copyright infringers. “It should send a clear message to Kazaa that it’s time to get on with the case.”

Lawyers for Kazaa’s Sydney-based owner Sharman Networks, said they wanted to study the 23-page ruling before commenting. An appeal is possible.

Judge Murray Wilcox also rejected an application to suspend the Australian litigation until there is a verdict in a similar case currently before a U.S. court.

The Australian case is due back in court March 23.

Although Wilcox rejected Sharman’s application, he also did not

allow the music industry unfettered access to the evidence—including computer files and other data—gathered in the raids at Sharman and other companies with links to Kazaa. The home of Kazaa chief executive Nikki Hemming also was raided.

Instead, Wilcox suggested Sharman and the record industry investigators meet to discuss access to the evidence. If they fail to agree on how that should happen, Wilcox said he would make a further ruling.

The raids are a rarely used power that can be granted to litigants in Australian civil cases.

Kazaa software allows users to swap music, movies and other computer files.

Last month, Kazaa lawyer Rod Dorman called the copyright infringement suit a “desperate act of an industry that is losing the litigation war.”

Kazaa already has one major court victory under its belt.

In December, the Dutch Supreme Court ruled that Kazaa’s Netherlands division cannot be held liable for copyright infringement of music or movies swapped using its free software.

dial rent

Fed says economy continuing to expand

By JEANNINE AVERSA
AP WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP)—Factories hummed and consumers kept cash registers busy in the first two months of this year, fresh evidence the economic recovery is moving ahead, according to a Federal Reserve report Wednesday.

“Economic activity continued to expand in January and February,” the Fed said in its latest survey of business conditions around the country. On the jobs front, however, the

report found employment “growing slowly” in most central bank districts.

A separate survey of chief executives of the nation’s biggest companies suggested hiring could start to pick up. One-third of the executives said they expected to increase hiring in the next six months, while 22 percent expected to cut payrolls and 45 percent expected no change, according to a Business Roundtable survey.

The association said that is the first time since the fall of 2002 that a larger share of

executives planned to add to payrolls rather than cut them.

“America’s CEOs believe that the U.S. economy is on course for continued steady improvement over the next six months,” said Hank McKinnell, chairman of the Business Roundtable and Pfizer Inc.’s chairman and chief executive.

In the Fed report, factory activity rose in 11 of the 12 regional Fed districts, good news for America’s manufacturers, who were hardest hit by the 2001 recession and have struggled mightily to get back on firm

footing. In the Fed’s Cleveland region factory activity didn’t go up, but rather held steady, the Fed survey said.

Even with the pickup in factory activity, manufacturers have lost 3 million jobs since July 2000. That’s the month factory employment peaked as the economy was enjoying a record-long expansion.

The lackluster jobs climate is a sore spot for President Bush, and the Democrats are trying to use it as an election-year issue.

“I don’t think our country has an economic strategy,” said Sen.

Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., who urged the administration to take steps reverse the loss of manufacturing jobs.

The Fed report also said that consumer spending on general merchandise rose in most of the Fed’s regions except for St. Louis, which reported a slight decline.

Strong or strengthening sales were reported for the New York, Richmond and the Dallas regions. Sales growth was moderate in the Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Minneapolis, Kansas City and

San Francisco districts. Retailers in Cleveland said sales met or exceeded expectations. In the Atlanta region, sales moderated a bit in February but were up from the same month a year ago, the Fed said.

However, it said that nearly all regions reported slower auto sales in January and February compared to a year ago.

Activity in the service sector also expanded in January and February. Boston and St. Louis, for instance, saw stronger demand for information technology services.

Ex-WorldCom CEO pleads innocent

NEW YORK (AP)—Former WorldCom CEO Bernard Ebbers pleaded innocent Wednesday to federal charges that he directed an \$11 billion accounting fraud, the biggest in U.S. corporate history.

The 62-year-old Ebbers was led to court in handcuffs after surrendering to the FBI early Wednesday, a day after former WorldCom finance chief Scott Sullivan pleaded guilty to an \$11 billion fraud and agreed to testify against his former boss at the nation’s No. 2 long-distance company.

Ebbers did not speak in court. His lawyer, Reid Weingarten, entered the innocent plea on his behalf to conspiracy, securities fraud and other charges that carry up to 25 years in prison. Ebbers was released on \$10 million bond that was partly secured by his Mississippi home.

“Bernie Ebbers never sought to mislead investors, never sought to improperly manipulate WorldCom’s numbers, never improperly took any money and never sought to hurt the company he built,” Weingarten told reporters.

Trial was set for Nov. 9, but

Assistant U.S. Attorney William Johnson said it could be delayed because additional charges were likely against Ebbers for the conspiracy and for “other conduct.” Johnson said other people may be charged.

As Ebbers walked past camera crews to a waiting car, he turned to his lawyer Reid Weingarten and pleaded, “Can I say something?” Weingarten shook his head, and Ebbers remained silent. Weingarten said Ebbers wants to tell his side, but “we have to keep him on a tight chain.”

Disney splits CEO, chairman positions

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—The Walt Disney Co.’s board voted to strip Michael Eisner of his chairman’s post Wednesday while retaining him as CEO, only hours after shareholders delivered a stinging rebuke by withholding 43 percent of their votes for his re-election to the board.

Disney directors voted unanimously to split the chairman and chief executive duties and make board member George Mitchell the company’s new chairman, even as they voiced their continuing approval of Eisner’s management and the company’s strategy.

The change is effective immediately.

The board also rejected a renewed overture from cable television giant Comcast Corp., saying it would serve no purpose to reconsider an offer already dismissed as too low.

“Our belief in the company’s strategy, financial results over the last several quarters, and the level of earnings and improved returns we expect going forward make us confident that results will validate our judgment on the quality of our management team,” the board said in a statement.

Although the action curbs



Eisner

Eisner’s control of the company and satisfies the concerns of corporate governance groups who had called for the change, it won’t satisfy the company’s most vocal critics—ex-board members Stanley Gold and Roy E. Disney—who have vowed to continue their fight to oust Eisner.

Mitchell, a former senator from Maine, may also prove to be a controversial choice. Shareholders withheld 24 percent of their votes from his re-election Wednesday—the second highest total after Eisner.

Career coaches tell unemployed to stay in the loop

By ELLEN MCCARTHY
THE WASHINGTON POST

When you're not working, a lazy, indulgent morning can easily lead to a lazy, indulgent day. And a lazy, indulgent week can easily lead to debt and depression.

No one ever intends to fall into these funks, of course, but it can be hard to avoid them when you have more time to kill than you have urgent to-dos.

Those who have been through such times—or who make their living guiding others out of them—say there are practical guidelines that all jobless people should keep in mind, no matter the reasons for their sabbaticals.

First, and maybe most important: Get out of bed and out of the house. Every day.

It sounds simplistic, but daytime television can become a powerful vortex of inertia. While Oprah and Dr. Phil are full of good advice, they're probably not going to introduce you to your next employer or enrich your life with fulfilling experiences.

"I think it's very important that they treat it like a workday. They should dress professionally and have a plan for the whole day," said Mary Ann Blackwell, a career coach with Blackwell Career Management. "If they decide to work on their careers three or four hours a day, it

What to do while looking for work

Some ways to reduce the emotional and financial trauma of being without a job:

- Turn off the television at a scheduled time each morning.
- Do some of your job searching away from home, such as at a library or coffee shop.
- Consider taking temp work to stay in the loop and earn some cash.
- Read industry news so you're up on the latest developments.
- Exercise regularly.
- Lay out a schedule for each day, dress professionally and keep in contact with former associates.
- Join civic and professional organizations to make new contacts. (*The Washington Post*)

should be uninterrupted."

Blackwell recommends going to the career section of the local library, rather than staying at home, to research job options. She also says that anyone who is out of work should join one or two civic organizations and at least one professional organization. Volunteering in the community, taking a couple of classes or showing up at industry seminars can be good ways to meet people who may be able to offer job leads, she said.

"If you're busy, it's easier to deal with the fact that you don't have your job situation in order," said Robyn Melzig, a 26-year-old District of Columbia resident who has been looking for an international economics research position since graduating from a master's program in June. To stay involved, she started writing

for her high school alumni magazine and joined the board of her condo association.

Melzig has submitted resumes to several head-hunting agencies and says she spends a lot of time networking. After six weeks of dedicated job hunting, she started taking sales and temporary administrative jobs to earn some cash.

Taking temp work may seem like an impediment to searching for full-time placement, but it can speed the process along and put some money in your pocket, said Polly Frye, president of Nancy Allen Associates Inc., an Arlington, Va., placement agency. Her agency helps people look for permanent positions, but she often recommends that clients take temp jobs in their industry. It may be a lower rung on the ladder than their last job, but

keeping a normal routine, making money and meeting new people is worth the trade-off, she said.

"You need to be up and be in the loop and get dressed. ... Keep your mind active," Frye said. But to avoid getting stuck in a bad situation, "you need to choose (a temp agency) that understands that you're looking for a full-time job."

Even waiting tables or selling shoes can increase the quality of life for a jobless person, according to Ardell Fleeson, who runs monthly support groups for out-of-work technology and telecom professionals.

"Sometimes you take a lower-level job just to save your sanity. It's just a way to keep money coming in," said Fleeson, who is also membership director at the Tower Club in Tysons Corner, Va.

Fleeson has a specific prescription for how members of her support groups should structure their days. According to her plan, one hour should be spent in quiet reflection and another hour should be devoted to reading the latest industry news. Fleeson suggests four hours of "administrative work"—making phone calls and sending out resumes—and two hours of networking with old associates and professional organizations. She also recommends adopting a "this too shall pass" attitude and says daily exercise should be a given.

Here's how to handle your boss's weird requests

By AMY JOYCE
THE WASHINGTON POST

Have you ever had that moment at work when you ask yourself: "Is this really in my job description?"

Take the case of Laurie Stewart, a reporter for a Pennsylvania trade publication that focuses on diagnostic imaging, who was asked a year ago by her boss to "rent" a guinea pig for the day. Her boss wanted the next publication's cover to show a guinea pig getting an MRI.

"I spent an entire workday as follows," she wrote in an e-mail.

"Me, in my best telephone voice: Hello. I work for a medical trade publication and am wondering if you rent guinea pigs.

"Pet store person: If we what?

"Me: If you rent out the pets you have for sale, specifically guinea pigs, for photo shoots. I am looking for a nice, plump, docile pig.

"Pet store person: Are you serious?

"Me: Yes.

"Pet store person: Am I on [Comedy Central's] 'Crank Yankers'?"

She never got the guinea pig. "The poor guys in the art department finally ended up having to draw it," she wrote.

Tom Morris, president of the training and outplacement firm

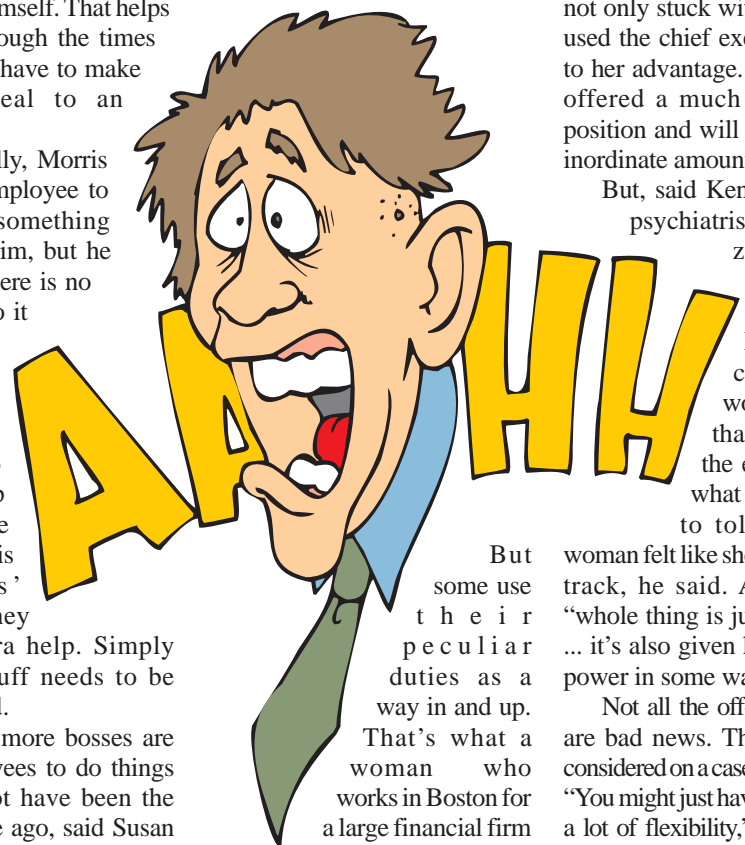
Morris Associates/Lincolnshire International in Washington, said his general policy is not to ask anyone to do something he wouldn't do himself. That helps guide him through the times when he does have to make an odd appeal to an employee.

Occasionally, Morris will ask an employee to take care of something personal for him, but he asks only if there is no way he can do it himself, and if his employee definitely has the time to do it. On the flip side, he says, he will become his employees' assistant if they need the extra help. Simply put: "This stuff needs to be done," he said.

More and more bosses are asking employees to do things that would not have been the norm a decade ago, said Susan D. Strayer, assistant director of career services at Johns Hopkins School of Professional Studies in Business and Education.

Strayer, who also runs a career coaching company in Washington, University and Career Decisions, tells clients to make sure they are comfortable taking on the requests. Because if the employee says yes once to

the boss who asks them to track his eBay bid for a lamp (yes, it happened), that employee will no doubt be asked again.



But some use their peculiar duties as a way in and up. That's what a woman who works in Boston for a large financial firm did. As assistant to the

chief executive, she has been asked to follow an employee suspected of going on a job interview (he was actually on his way to the doctor). She was told to call telephone numbers on the organization's phone bills to find out where employees had been calling during their work hours, and she has been required to

keep the chief executive's Girlfriend A occupied while he was out with Girlfriend B.

However, this woman has not only stuck with the job, but used the chief executive's trust to her advantage. She has been offered a much higher-level position and will be making an inordinate amount of money.

But, said Kenneth Settel, a psychiatrist and organizational consultant in Brookline, Mass., who counseled this woman, "a lot of that depends on the employee and what they are able to tolerate." This

woman felt like she had an inside track, he said. Although the "whole thing is just outrageous ... it's also given her a sense of power in some ways."

Not all the off-the-wall pleas are bad news. They should be considered on a case-by-case basis. "You might just have a job that has a lot of flexibility," said Kerry J. Sulkowicz, founder of New York-based Boswell Group, a workplace psychology consulting firm, and you can score a lot of points by carrying out the tasks.

And, Sulkowicz said, some employees could take it as a compliment that their boss trusts them enough to buy his clothes in an emergency, or get that guinea pig.

nikko

Nation

Bush, Kerry open battle for White House

By RON FOURNIER
AP POLITICAL WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Bush versus John Kerry. What promises to be a contentious eight-month battle for the White House opened Wednesday with the incumbent buffeted by dangers in postwar Iraq and the loss of jobs at home, yet holding the upper hand on money and Electoral College math.

Partisans from both parties are already fretting over their candidate's chances.

"President Bush has the best odds, but incumbency has its disadvantages, too," said Tom Slade, former chairman of the Florida Republican Party. "There's four years of record to throw rocks at, and I've often debated with myself over which I would rather be—the incumbent or challenger."

"This election might settle that question," Slade said with a sigh, "for better or worse."

If so, it may be settled in Florida and 15 states that Bush won or lost by 5 percentage points

or fewer in 2000—the Midwest states of Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin; the Northwest's Washington and Oregon; Pennsylvania, Maine and New Hampshire in the Northeast; Western states Nevada and New Mexico, and the South's Tennessee and Arkansas.

Tennessee may be the only 2000 battleground that doesn't qualify. If Al Gore couldn't win his Republican-leaning home state, Kerry probably won't, Democratic and GOP strategists said.

Two states Bush won by just 6 percentage points—Arizona and West Virginia—could be more competitive this year.

"The Hispanic influence, as well as massive immigration from California, has moderated the politics of this state," said state Sen. Ken Cheuvront, an Arizona Democrat.

In his first ad blitz, an extraordinary \$10.5 million buy, Bush is targeting voters in

16 battleground states from 2000—minus Tennessee but plus West Virginia and Arizona.



Bush



Kerry

In a show of strength, he's even running ads in the traditionally Democratic state of Delaware, which Gore won by double digits in 2000.

"We know this election is going to be decided in a limited number of states in the Electoral College and we've made decisions based on that," said Matthew Dowd, the campaign's chief strategist.

Changes in the Electoral Map favor Bush. The president won 30 states four years ago, worth 271 electoral votes in 2000. Reapportionment has increased their value to 278, without a vote being cast.

Kerry's base consists of 11 states plus the District of Columbia won most easily by Gore in 2000, worth 168 electoral votes Nov. 2.

Besides those Democratic strongholds, Kerry's strategists believe he can add Michigan, Washington state and Maine to

pass the 200-vote threshold. Claimed by Gore in 2000, they may be the ripest Democratic targets among all tossup states, but Bush is competing hard for them.

The next tier of Kerry targets are even tougher: Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Oregon, Wisconsin and New Mexico. Winning all six, no easy task, would put Kerry within striking distance of the coveted 270 electoral votes.

He would still need to win at least one of the most competitive states—Nevada, New Hampshire, West Virginia, Missouri, Arizona, Ohio and Florida are among the targets.

Other Southern tossup states may come into play for Kerry, but only if he's doing unexpectedly well everywhere else. Martha Dixon of the Democratic National Committee gave Bush a good shot in Arkansas.

"With all his problems, he's still the president—and that counts for something," Dixon said. "He gets to fly around the country on his big plane and talk big talk."

Money may be Bush's biggest edge. He has raised more than \$150 million, shattering his own record and giving him easy cash to try to define Kerry as a soft-on-terrorism, tax-raising, flip-flopping liberal.

Autopsies released on slain Miss. family

JACKSON, Miss. (AP)—The father of a family found slain in the Mississippi woods was shot to death, and his wife and their 4-year-old son were strangled, according to autopsy results released Wednesday.

The findings were made public only hours after relatives of the Hargon family arranged Friday funerals for the three who disappeared from their rural home on Valentine's Day.

The bodies of Michael Hargon, his wife, Rebecca, and their 4-year-old son, James Patrick, were found in a wooded area Tuesday night. The discovery occurred shortly after Michael's cousin, Earnest Lee Hargon, was charged with capital murder.

Michael Hargon, 27, suffered a fatal bullet wound to the head, said Warren Strain, a spokesman for the Mississippi Highway Patrol.

District Attorney James Powell has said Michael Hargon apparently was killed at the family home in Vaughan, about 35 miles north of Jackson, but he was not sure where Rebecca Hargon and her son died.

Spent bullet casings from a .22-caliber weapon were found at the home, but a weapon has not been recovered.

"This tragedy of monumental proportions has had an impact on everyone in Mississippi," Public Safety Commissioner Rusty Fortenberry said. "With the results of these tests—as horrific as they are and proving our worst fears—now we may begin the healing process."

Authorities believe Earnest Lee Hargon, a 43-year-old cattle truck driver, acted alone. While no single motive had been put forward, there was speculation that he was angry at being written out of his adoptive father's will that gave Michael Hargon several acres of land in nearby Madison County.

Hargon was charged with three counts of capital murder. Yazoo County District Attorney James Powell has said he would seek the death penalty.

Earnest Lee Hargon, being held without bond, should have an initial hearing on the charges in the next couple of weeks, his court-appointed attorney said.



flamingo
cmyk

Same-sex public school limits to be eased

FBI sought McVeigh death row interview

WASHINGTON (AP)—As the clock ticked toward Timothy McVeigh’s execution, senior FBI agents pressed behind closed doors for permission to interview the convicted Oklahoma City bomber, but the plan never materialized amid internal disagreements, officials say.

The agents wanted to resolve questions about McVeigh’s whereabouts on certain dates that were left unanswered by his public statements and the evidence—essentially filling in gaps in his timeline before the bombing, the officials told The Associated Press.

The plan was scrapped when the government couldn’t resolve who would attend the interview or how it would be conducted. Officials also became distracted by the belated discovery of some 4,000 pages of documents that had not been turned over to McVeigh’s defense during his trial.

That discovery prompted a dramatic one-month delay in McVeigh’s execution, during which FBI and Treasury agents continued to press unsuccessfully for access to McVeigh on death row.



McVeigh

First phase over for Nichols jury pick

McALESTER, Okla. (AP)—Initial screening of prospective jurors in the murder trial of Oklahoma City bombing conspirator Terry Nichols concluded Wednesday with the selection of 42 people who said they could be fair and impartial.

At least two more rounds of questioning awaits this group, including individual examinations on Thursday that will focus on whether they can impose the death penalty.

Judge Steven Taylor, prosecutors and defense attorneys are working to select 12 jurors and six alternates to determine Nichols’ guilt or innocence on 161 state counts of first-degree murder for the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, which killed 168 people. Jury selection began Monday.

Nichols is already serving a life prison sentence on federal convictions for the deaths of eight federal law enforcement officers in the April 19, 1995 bombing. The state charges are for the other 160 victims and one of the victims’ unborn fetus.

The trial is expected to last more than three months.

Prosecutors say Nichols, 48, helped co-conspirator Timothy McVeigh acquire components for the fertilizer-and-fuel-oil bomb, assisted McVeigh in building the explosive device and robbed an Arkansas firearms dealer to finance the attack.

McVeigh was convicted on federal murder charges and executed in 2001.

The interview debate was described by several current and former officials. They said it showed the government didn’t know everything it wanted about McVeigh before he was put to death.

The officials said the potential interview became a primary focus of the remaining McVeigh investigative team during the spring of 2001 and was the subject of a high-level meeting in Oklahoma City in March of that year.

The officials said the debate was documented in numerous FBI e-mails,

and they were uncertain whether those e-mails should have been turned over to lawyers for the upcoming Oklahoma state murder trial of Terry Nichols, McVeigh’s co-conspirator.

Besides filling in the gaps for McVeigh’s whereabouts, one senior official said agents had seen instances in the past where “death row inmates were willing to give us some of their thought processes as their execution neared and we hoped McVeigh might do the same.”

WASHINGTON (AP)—Public schools are about to get broad new freedom to teach boys and girls separately, perhaps the biggest shakeup to coed classrooms in three decades.

The Education Department plans to change its enforcement of Title IX, the landmark anti-discrimination law, to make it easier for districts to create single-sex classes and schools. The move would give local school leaders discretion to expand choices for parents, whether that means a math class, a grade level or an entire school designed for one gender.

U.S. research on single-sex schooling is limited, but advocates say it shows better student achievement and attendance and fewer discipline problems. Critics say there is no clear evidence, and that single-sex learning doesn’t get students ready for an integrated world.

At least 91 of 91,000 public schools offer a form of same-sex education now, including The Philadelphia High School for Girls, which sends almost all of its graduates to college.

“The environment itself, I think it empowers girls,” said Principal Geraldine Myles. “There is no ceiling to stop them from being anything they want to be, in terms of gender. It just isn’t there, and at their impressionable age, it probably makes a difference.”

While opponents predict the new federal plan will be a big blow to equal education opportunity, department officials say there will be no easing of protection against sexual discrimination.

“We are not advocating single-sex schools, and we are not advocating single-sex classrooms,” said Ken Marcus, who oversees civil rights for the department. “We understand that coeducation remains the norm in American public education, and will continue to be the norm. We are simply trying to ensure that educators have flexibility to provide options.”

Since current rules began in 1975, single-sex classes have been allowed only in limited cases, such as gym classes involving contact sports. The proposed regulations announced Wednesday will loosen those restrictions considerably, allowing districts to create single-sex classes to provide a diversity of choices, or to meet the particular needs of students.

Schools would have to treat boys and girls equally in determining what courses to offer. And single-gender enrollment must be voluntary.

If a school creates a single-sex class in a subject, it would not be required to offer the other gender its own similar class, but it would have to offer a coed version of it.

The department’s plan would also make it easier to create entire single-sex schools.

Current rules allow those schools, but only when a district creates a comparable single-sex school for the other gender. That restriction would disappear. Instead, districts would have the option of demonstrating that their coed schools provide “substantially equal” benefits to the excluded sex.

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Gay couples start tying knot in Oregon

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)—A new front in the battle over same-sex marriage opened Wednesday in Portland, where county officials issued dozens of licenses to gay couples after deciding that Oregon law allowed the unions.

New York’s attorney general, meanwhile, said gay weddings in that state are illegal, even though he personally would like to see the law changed. His opinion didn’t deter a second mayor in the state from announcing not only that he would conduct gay marriages, but that he intends to marry his own same-sex partner.

Mayors and county officials



Rebecca Kennedy, left, holding her 4-year-old daughter, Ava, is married to Mary Li, center, before Judge Betty Roberts, right, in Portland, Ore., Wednesday, March 3, 2004.

Developments on gay-marriage issue

- Oregon’s most populous county began issuing dozens of marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Officials in Multnomah County, which includes Portland, said it would be unconstitutional to deny gay couples licenses, but Democratic Gov. Ted Kulongoski disagreed and Republicans demanded that Attorney General Hardy Myers stop the weddings.
- New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer issued an opinion saying same-sex marriages violate state law, although he added he would like to see the law changed and that it’s up to the courts to determine whether the law is constitutional. His opinion did not deter New Paltz Mayor Jason West, who has been criminally charged for conducting same-sex weddings, or Nyack Mayor John Shields, who plans not only to conduct gay weddings but also to marry his own same-sex partner.
- New York City’s top lawyer, Corporation Counsel Michael Cardozo, issued an opinion saying same-sex marriages are illegal, and Mayor Michael Bloomberg vowed to enforce the law.
- A conservative group called on California Attorney General Bill Lockyer to file criminal charges against San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom, who has authorized thousands of gay weddings in the past month. Although it is a misdemeanor to marry a same-sex couple in California, a spokeswoman said Lockyer believes the best way to resolve the issue is by bringing it to the California Supreme Court.
- In Washington, D.C., Republican senators told a gathering of anti-gay marriage activists that a constitutional amendment banning the weddings is necessary. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist said the “wildfire” of same-sex marriages will spread throughout the country if Congress fails to take action.
- In Massachusetts, a Republican lawmaker who opposes same-sex marriage appeared to be the victor in a special election Tuesday to replace a former state senator who strongly supports gay weddings. Rep. Scott Brown had just 345 more votes than Democrat Angus McQuilken, a gay-marriage supporter who was considering a recount.
- A half-dozen gay and lesbian couples went to the Wayne County clerk’s office in Detroit to seek marriage licenses. County officials turned them away and offered them copies of the state law that bars them from getting married.

in four states have allowed gay marriages, including thousands in San Francisco, which started the wedding march Feb. 12. The marriages have met with fierce opposition and calls for a constitutional amendment banning the unions.

In Portland, more than 150 gay couples lined up to get marriage licenses after Multnomah County officials decided it would be unconstitutional to deny them.

Among those getting licenses was Christine Tanner, who won a landmark Oregon court ruling in 1998 ordering state and local governments to offer benefits to their employees’ same-sex partners.

“There are only so many big events in people’s lives—birth, marriage and death,” said Tanner, who has raised two children with her partner of 19 years. “It’s a big deal. For us, this is symbolic.”

Gov. Ted Kulongoski said he favors civil unions but questioned the legality of the marriages.

“Reasonable people can differ, but I think when you read (the state marriage statute) at the time in history when the statute was written I think it is clear they were thinking about a man and a woman getting married,” the Democrat said.

Kulongoski said it’s up to Democratic Attorney General Hardy Myers to decide what enforcement action to take, if any. A spokesman for Myers said he expected to issue an opinion in a few days.

Board of Commissioners Chairwoman Diane Linn directed Multnomah County to begin issuing the licenses late Tuesday, after consulting with the county attorney. She did so without an official vote, but with the support of three of the county’s four other commissioners.

“We will not allow discrimination to continue when the constitution of the state of Oregon grants privileges equally to all citizens,” Commissioner Lisa Naito said at a news conference.

Oregon’s Republican leadership demanded that Myers stop the marriages immediately.

“I’m very upset that this travesty is taking place in Oregon. It definitely is an insult to the voters and to the people,” said Kevin Mannix, chairman of the state Republican Party.

In New York, where one mayor has conducted 25 same-sex marriages in the past week, Attorney General Eliot Spitzer issued an opinion saying state law bars such unions. But he added that it is the courts’ job to determine whether the law is constitutional.

ctsi

US plans annual reviews of Guantanamo cases

WASHINGTON (AP)—A three-member panel of U.S. military officers would annually review the case of each prisoner held at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and recommend whether they could be freed, under a proposal announced by the Pentagon on Wednesday.

The reviews, announced by Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld in February, will determine whether prisoners, if released, would remain a threat to the United States, officials have said.

Officials have described the panel as a kind of parole board for the terrorism suspects held at the Guantanamo naval base.

The prisoner’s home country and family could take part in the review, providing

information that either would help free the detainee, or keep him imprisoned, a public draft of the review policy says. The prisoner would be allowed to defend himself.

The military would assign an officer to serve as an “assistant” and spokesperson for the prisoner, the draft says. It does not say whether this officer would be a lawyer.

The three-member panel would include an intelligence officer who could judge whether the prisoner held any more value as an information source.

The panel would recommend to a designated civilian official at the Pentagon whether to release or continue to hold the prisoner, and that official would make the final call, the draft says. That official

must be someone who had been appointed by the president and approved by the Senate.

Each prisoner would be reviewed, at a minimum, every year, the draft says.

Human rights groups have criticized the treatment of the prisoners as well as their lack of access to lawyers. The Pentagon said it can hold the prisoners for the duration of the war on terrorism—which some interpret as indefinitely, given the nature of the threat.

The Pentagon said the review panels are at its discretion, and not being instituted under any international law.

The Pentagon is accepting public comment on the draft and expects to publish final rules in a few weeks.

2 plead guilty in terror arms sale plot

By **SETH HETTENA**

AP WRITER

SAN DIEGO (AP)—Two defendants admitted their roles Wednesday in a plot to sell Stinger anti-aircraft missiles to the Taliban and al-Qaida, authorities said.

Ilyas Ali, a naturalized U.S. citizen born in India, and Muhamed Abid Afridi of Pakistan pleaded guilty to providing material support to terrorists and conspiracy to distribute heroin and hashish, according to the U.S. Attorney’s office.

The case against a third defendant, Syed Mustajab Shah of Pakistan, is pending.

In a plea bargain, Ali and

Afridi admitted they planned to sell 5 tons of hashish and a half-ton of Pakistani heroin in exchange for cash and four shoulder-fired Stinger missiles, which they intended to sell to the Taliban. Such missiles can be used to shoot down airplanes, including commercial jets.

Both men knew that the Taliban and al-Qaida, Osama bin Laden’s terrorist network, were “virtually synonymous,” prosecutor Michael Skerlos said Wednesday.

The men are to be sentenced in federal court June 29. The plea agreement recommends 5-year prison terms for both.

Their attorneys declined to comment.

Attorney General John

Ashcroft said that “America is safer and its citizens are more secure” because of the prosecution.

Shah, Ali and Afridi were arrested in September 2000, by police in Hong Kong who received a tip from the FBI. The three were secretly videotaped in meetings days earlier with undercover FBI agents at a Hong Kong hotel. Ali also met in April 2002 with an undercover agent in San Diego.

During a jailhouse interview with The Associated Press in Hong Kong, Ali said he ran a deli and grocery in St. Paul, Minn., and was set up by the FBI.

American law enforcers “screwed up 9-11 and now they’re arresting innocent people for political purposes,” he said.

Jury pick in Peterson trial to begin

REDWOOD CITY, Calif.

(AP)—When potential jurors in Scott Peterson’s double-murder trial show up at the San Mateo County courthouse Thursday, they should come prepared to answer questions ranging from what stickers grace their car bumpers to whether they’ve ever had extramarital affairs.

At least 200 residents will be asked to fill out a nearly 30-page questionnaire, answering more than 100 queries about their attitudes toward law enforcement, lawyers, gun ownership, the death penalty and cheating on a spouse.

Authorities allege Peterson, 31, murdered his wife in their Modesto home on Dec. 24, 2002, because he was having an affair with a massage therapist, then drove her body to San Francisco Bay and dumped it overboard from his boat. He maintains his innocence and claims he went fishing the day she disappeared.

Jury selection is expected to take at least a month.

The questionnaire, while

reviewed twice in open court, has not been made available to the public. Developed by prosecutors and defense attorneys with minor editing by Judge Alfred A. Delucchi, its contents were approved in court Tuesday.

In an effort to put people at ease, Delucchi and the lawyers will question them individually—out of the presence of other potential jurors.

“The absence of an audience should make the process more relaxed,” said David Graeven, president of the San Francisco-based Trial Behavior Consulting. “It also prevents the pollution or contamination of the panel.”

Much of Thursday probably will be taken up by potential jurors filling out the questionnaires and the judge excusing some because they can’t be impartial or they would suffer a hardship by serving on a jury.

Prospective jurors also must be willing to consider recommending a death sentence for Peterson if they convict him.

Ex-Bush adviser takes jab at Kerry

DALLAS (AP)—President Bush’s longtime adviser Karen Hughes on Wednesday took a pointed jab at Sen. John Kerry, saying the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee lacks the “message clarity” of her former boss.

In a speech focusing on her experiences with Bush, Hughes conceded the president’s directness makes some people uncomfortable.

“You’ve all heard him. Good versus evil. With us or against us,” Hughes said. “It’s one of the things that I think makes Europe a little uncomfortable with him. It makes the Democrats a little uncomfortable, too. The Democrats’ candidate for president has been having a little message clarity problem.”

Hughes said Kerry “has railed against the Patriot Act, against the No Child Left Behind

education reform, against free trade and NAFTA. Yet, he voted for all three of them.”

Tossing another punch, Hughes thanked voters in the Democratic primary process for choosing Kerry.

“It took Howard Dean to make John Kerry look electable,” she said to laughter and applause of about 600 people attending the speech sponsored by the National Center for Policy Analysis.

Bill Burton, a Kerry spokesman, said he agreed with Hughes about one thing.

“Bush does have a clear message—the worst job loss since Herbert Hoover. You can’t really be more clear than that,” Burton said. “John Kerry’s message has been crystal clear—that he’s going to create jobs and rebuild the economy that George Bush broke.”

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Asia

‘Indon Army ordered deadly ambush’

By SLOBODAN LEKIC
AP WRITER

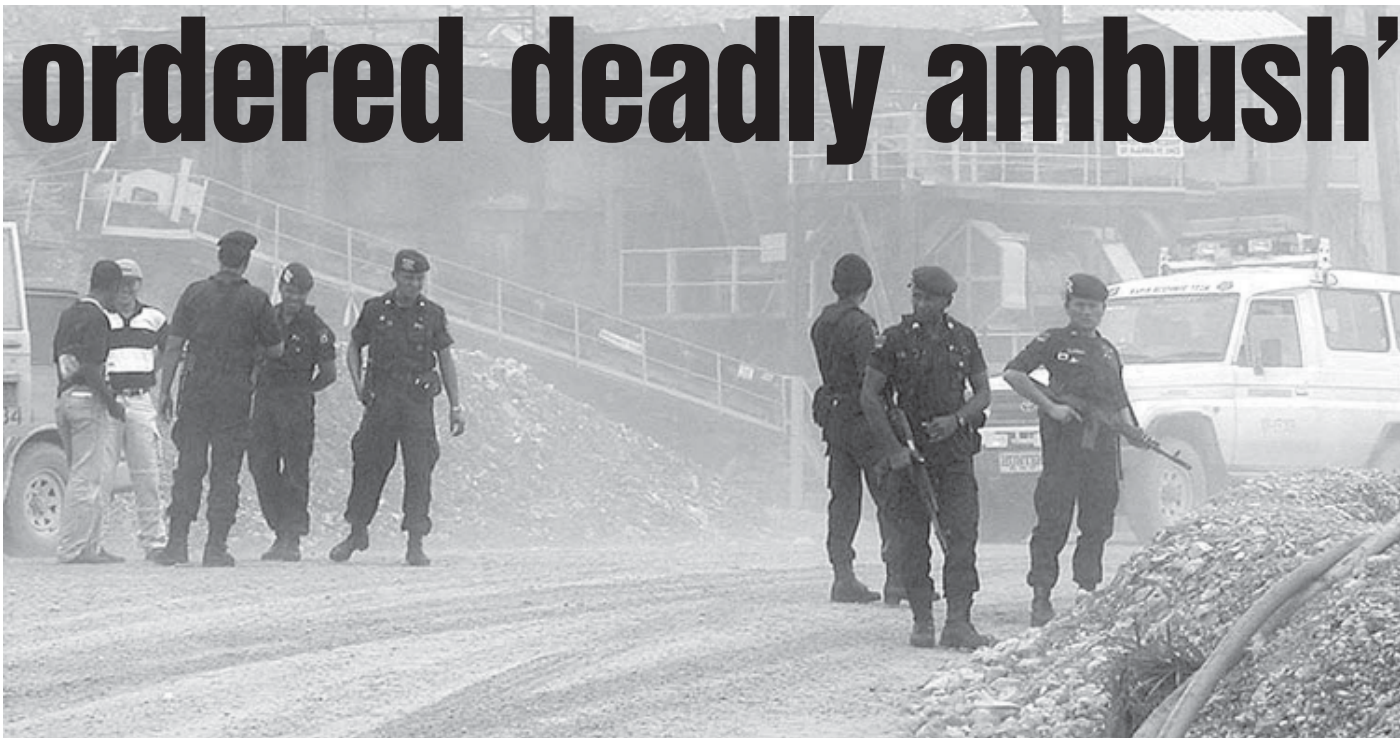
JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP)—U.S. officials believe local army commanders ordered an ambush that killed two American teachers near a gold mine in a case that has held up resumption of normal U.S.-Indonesia military ties, two American officials told The Associated Press.

Elements of the military have long been suspected in the 2002 attack, but a much-criticized joint Indonesia police-military investigation proved

inconclusive. U.S. authorities said their probe continues with FBI agents now in Indonesia, making their fifth visit to the ambush site.

“It’s no longer a question of who did it,” a senior U.S. official familiar with the investigation, told AP. “It’s only a question of how high up this went within the chain of command,” said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

FBI officials and the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta have refused to discuss any evidence. “We do not comment on ongoing



AP
Indonesian elite police officers of Mobile Brigade stand guard at the site where gunmen ambushed a convoy, killing two U.S. teachers, Rick Spier of Littleton, Colo., and Ted Burgon of Sunriver, Ore., and an Indonesian civilian, near a huge gold and copper mine operated by PT Freeport Indonesia, in Tembagapura, Papua province, in this Sept. 1, 2002 file photo.

investigations,” said Stanley Harsha, an embassy spokesman.

Privately, U.S. officials say little doubt remains about who was responsible for the attack on vehicles driving down a road to a gold mine operated by New Orleans-based Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold.

Any U.S. finding against the military, however, could jeopardize the Bush administration’s desire to restore U.S.-Indonesian military ties, which were suspended after army atrocities in East Timor in 1999.

The Bush administration regards Indonesia—the world’s most populous Muslim nation—as its key Southeast Asian ally in the war on terror.

The Republican-controlled Congress initially backed an initiative to restore military ties, voting in 2002 to approve a resumption of the International Military Education and Training program.

But renewed doubts set in after the ambush. And in January, lawmakers reinstated the ban until the State Department determines the Indonesian government is helping with the FBI probe.

The State Department’s annual human rights report, released last week, criticized as “ineffectual” the joint Indonesia police-military investigation, saying police and soldiers failed to cooperate.

Immediately after the attack, local police commander Brig. Gen. Raziman Tarigan blamed special forces soldiers. The military brass denied the accusation, and assumed control of the investigation.

Indonesian officials have since blamed rebels, although they are armed only with bows and arrows and antiquated bolt-action rifles. Sophisticated automatic weapons were used in the ambush.

Now and in 2002, army checkpoints control the remote mountain road ambush site, which is not accessible to civilians.

Maj. Gen. Sulaiman Ahmad Basir, chief of the military police, refused comment on the FBI investigation. Freeport-McMoRan officials in Indonesia also won’t talk about the case.

On Aug. 31, 2002, armed assailants staged the ambush near the world’s largest gold mine at Timika in Papua province on the island of New Guinea. Two teachers were killed—Rick Spier of Littleton, Colo., and Ted Burgon of Sunriver, Ore.—and eight other people were wounded.

FBI investigators believe local army commanders were trying to extort protection payments from Freeport after the company reduced its regular contributions to them, U.S. officials told AP. The attackers likely were unaware the convoy carried Americans, the officials said.

Spier’s widow, Patsy, suffered multiple gunshot and shrapnel wounds in the attack. She’s pressing law-makers for justice.

“Why would we want to improve ties with Indonesia and re-establish ties with the military if the police have accused them of being behind the killing of Americans?” she told AP. “The people who carried out that ambush were arrogant enough to think they could get away with it because they’ve gotten away with so many crimes in the past.”

Indonesia’s army has a history of human rights abuses, during and after ex-leader Suharto’s military-backed dictatorship that ended in 1998.

In 1999, the army led the destruction in East Timor following the U.N.-organized independence referendum.

8 Japanese workers exposed to radiation

TOKYO (AP)—Eight workers were exposed to low-level radiation at a power plant in northwestern Japan last month when they were accidentally sprayed with contaminated water, an official said Wednesday. The doses were not considered dangerous.

The Feb. 25 accident at Japan Atomic Power Co.’s Tsuruga plant, 205 miles northwest of Tokyo, was reported for the first time Wednesday in the company’s monthly report of minor incidents, Fukui prefecture spokesman Shiro Konishi said.

Konishi said nuclear plant operators are only required to file immediate reports about high-level radiation exposure.

Tests on the workers showed the radiation doses they received were about one-twentieth the allowable limit, he said. They were examined and released by doctors.

The plant workers had turned off a pump to repair a hose used to pump water between pools where spent plutonium rods are kept, Konishi said. Another worker switched the pump on before they reconnected the hose, drenching their faces and safety suits with contaminated water, he said.

They immediately rinsed with clean water, he said.

Resource-poor Japan relies on nuclear power for about 30 percent of its electricity.

church
chicken

3 bodies pulled from Philippine ship wreck

By OLIVER TEVES
AP WRITER

MARIVELES, Philippines (AP)—Divers recovered three bodies Wednesday, including a pregnant woman, from a half-submerged ferry that caught fire in a possible terrorist attack, giving hope to relatives that the remaining 131 missing will be found.

Authorities continued to look for clues to what caused an explosion and fire aboard the Superferry 14 last Friday off Manila. The government says it has found no trace of explosives, casting doubt on a claim by the Muslim extremist group Abu Sayyaf that it put a suicide bomber aboard.

However, the coast guard confirmed that a man identified by the al-Qaida-linked group as the bomber was among the missing, and officials have not ruled out terrorism.

“There is still an investigation going on, but the position of the coast guard is that ... anybody can make (such) a statement,” coast guard spokesman Lt. Arman Balilo said.

Presidential spokesman Ignacio Bunye urged the public to “not dwell on untoward rumors and scenarios and wait instead for the official report of the investigation.”

So far, four bodies have been recovered, including a pregnant woman and two others on Wednesday. Divers are still combing the wreckage for remains. The ferry had 899 passengers and crew.

The bodies of two women and a man were pulled from the ferry’s submerged tourist section, coast guard chief Vice Adm. Arturo Gosingan told reporters at the site.

Along the coast of Manila Bay, where the ferry was lying on one side in shallow water, dozens of relatives aboard a coast guard ship and a commercial vessel went from village to village in hopes that their kin were rescued, but had not been able to contact them.

Despite the Abu Sayyaf’s claim of responsibility, officials said there was no indication so far that a bomb caused the blaze.

However, Oscar Sevilla, administrator of the Maritime Industry Authority that conducted the initial probe, said interviews with the passengers and crew showed sabotage was possible.

“The passengers were unanimous in saying there was a very loud blast,” Sevilla told DZBB radio, adding that the ship’s security officials told him that no equipment or chemicals were on board that could have accidentally exploded.



Coast guard and rescue ships gather round the burnt remains of the Superferry 14 as they continue search and rescue operations in Mariveles, Bataan province, northwest of Manila Wednesday March 3, 2004.

FPJ cleared to run for the RP presidency

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Film star Fernando Poe Jr. was

firmly in race for the presidency Thursday after the Supreme Court rejected an effort to disqualify him over questions about his citizenship, clearing the way for a May 10 showdown with incumbent Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

The court’s decision eased fears that Poe’s supporters among the poor would mount violent backlash if their candidate was booted from the campaign.

The most recent opinion polls have shown Poe and Arroyo in a virtual tie in their battle for a six-year term, well ahead of three other candidates.

Poe’s opponents argued in a petition that he failed to meet the requirement for a presidential candidate to be a natural-born Philippine citizen, arguing that his out-of-wedlock birth to an American mother means he should be deemed a U.S. citizen.

In a 53-page decision Wednesday, the justices voted 8-5 to uphold an Elections Commission decision to reject the petition, with the top court “declaring that Fernando Poe is a natural-born Filipino” because of his father’s Philippine citizenship, court

spokesman Ismail Khan told news conference.

Poe’s spokesman, Rodolfo Reyes, said the ruling would bolster the actor’s already-strong popularity rating and convince hesitant donors to back him.

“We can now go full-steam ahead in our campaign because we have all long considered this petition to be a harassment suit,” Reyes said.

Arroyo wished Poe the best, saying the decision would give voters a wide choice.

“Let us unify behind democracy, clean elections and the rule of law,” said her spokesman, Ignacio Bunye.

The lawyers who filed the challenge have 15 days to appeal, but the success of such challenges is rare.

The petition argued that according to the laws when Poe was born, he should have taken on his mother’s citizenship. However, the law was changed in 1973 to allow out-of-wedlock children to take on the citizenship of their fathers.

Additionally, the petition questioned the citizenship of

Poe’s father, arguing he was Spanish, which Poe supporters disputed. While the court acknowledged Poe was born out of wedlock, it declared his father

Filipino and upheld the candidate’s local citizenship.

The cliffhanger case has unsettled financial markets in recent weeks. Opposition politicians have accused Arroyo’s camp of orchestrating

the petition against Poe, a close friend of disgraced ex-President Joseph Estrada, who was ousted in 2001 amid massive anti-corruption protests Arroyo helped lead.

Arroyo has denied the allegation.

Some of those threatening to take to the streets were among the thousands who stormed the presidential palace on May 1, 2001, in a bid to reinstate Estrada. Six people were killed in the riots, which Arroyo called a failed power grab.

The armed forces have been on guard against signs of new unrest in the 120,000-strong military in a country with a recent history of coups and army uprisings.



Poe

Sri Lanka rebel general splits from army

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP)—A general commanding thousands of guerrillas in Sri Lanka split from the main Tamil Tiger army on Wednesday because of disputes over the deployment of fighters.

Rebel leader Karuna, who commands forces in the nation’s

east, had been arguing with Tamil Tiger leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran over the sending of new recruits from the east to the north.

The division - a month before parliamentary elections - deals a serious blow to the rebels, who until now have been largely

united in their 19-year war for a separate homeland.

Still, a senior official from Karuna’s office said the split would not lead to fighting between the rebel factions. He said Karuna, who uses one name, was committed to a fragile two-year-old cease-fire with the government.

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Pakistan Shiites mourn victims of attack

By AFZAL NADEEM
AP WRITER

QUETTA, Pakistan (AP)—Shiite Muslims beat their chests and wailed in mourning Wednesday for loved ones slain in a suicide attack on a religious procession that authorities suspect was carried out by an Islamic militant group with close ties to the Taliban—and possibly al-Qaida.

There is no evidence of a link between Tuesday’s attack and deadly bombings in Iraq that occurred less than two hours earlier. But authorities said their inquiry was just beginning into the assault in Quetta that killed 43, including the two attackers, and wounded over 160.

“There is no indication so far of any link between the two attacks,” Tasneem Noorani, the top bureaucrat at the Interior Ministry, told The Associated Press.

U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said investigators were looking into whether the attacks were coordinated—but had no evidence of that yet. Estimates of the toll from the bombings in Iraq on Tuesday ranged from 117 to 271.

A hallmark of al-Qaida is to launch multiple attacks at the same time. The sectarian bombings in Pakistan also appeared in line with the ambitions of an al-Qaida-linked Jordanian militant, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who has said he aims to spark a Shiite-Sunni civil war in Iraq.

Suspicion in the Quetta attack fell



Family members sit at local mosque on Wednesday, March 3, 2004 in Quetta, Pakistan with the bodies of Shiite Muslims who were killed by attacks during a religious procession Tuesday.

on one of Pakistan’s main Sunni militant groups, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, according to the deputy chief of police in Baluchistan province, Arif Akram.

“Most probably, they are members of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi,” Akram told AP. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi is closely linked

to Afghanistan’s former rulers, the Taliban militia, and is believed to have ties to Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaida terrorist network. It has been implicated in the slaying of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl as well as numerous church and bus bombings.

A government official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said “medium intensity explosives” were used in Tuesday’s attack, though it was not immediately clear what kind.

The carnage began when three suspects hurled grenades and fired shots

into a religious procession, and then detonated grenades and explosives strapped to their bodies. Enraged Shiites targeted a Sunni mosque and shops in retaliatory rioting.

The bloodshed came on Ashoura, a day when Islam’s Shiite faithful mark the death of a revered 7th-century leader by marching in black and lashing themselves in penitence.

President Gen. Pervez Musharraf, who escaped two assassination attempts in December, vowed to arrest those behind the attack and said Pakistan would be rid of terrorism.

“There’s no doubt in my mind there’s an evil mind behind these attacks,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Masood Khan said. “We shall repulse all these dark designs against the state and people of Pakistan.”

As people gathered for the mass funeral Wednesday, Shiite leaders delayed the ceremonies, saying they would not take the bodies to the cemetery until the provincial police chief, the head of the anti-terrorism force and the city mayor are fired for security lapses.

“These people have no right to remain in office,” said Maulana Jan Ali Shah, a Shiite leader. “They should be sacked immediately.”

It is normally imperative in Muslim culture to bury the dead quickly.

On Wednesday, soldiers in armored personnel carriers patrolled Quetta, which remained under curfew. Nearly 60 shops stood gutted, goods scattered outside, after rioting and arson attacks.

Asia

World

Al-Qaida denies bombings in Iraq

By SALAH NASRAWI
AP WRITER

CAIRO, Egypt (AP)—A letter purported to come from al-Qaida denied responsibility for bombings that killed at least 117 people during a Shiite Muslim festival in Iraq, blaming American troops instead—but it also called Shiites infidels.

“The American troops have carried out a massacre to kill innocent Shiites in Karbala, their (Shiites’) infidel city, and in Baghdad,” said the letter, received Wednesday via e-mail by the London-based Al-Quds Al-Arabi newspaper and shared with The Associated Press in Cairo.

“We say to the Muslims that we are innocent of this act, and that we are not guilty of worshipping as Shiites worship, except that we believe in God.”

The Iraqi Governing Council said 271 people were killed and 393 were injured in Tuesday’s attacks.

Al-Qaida, led by Osama bin Laden, is a predominantly Sunni militant group, and draws its members from some of the most conservative streams of

Sunni thought—segments of Muslim society that consider Shiites heretics.

The letter was signed by al-Qaida’s Abu Hafs al-Masri brigades, and its authenticity could not be verified. Al-Qaida often claims responsibility for suicide bombings, but it is rare for it to put out a message indicating it was not involved in a certain attack.

Last year, it reportedly issued a statement to the Al-Arabiya television network denying responsibility for an Aug. 29 bombing in Najaf, Iraq that killed Shiite leader Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim and more than 85 other people.

Lately, its claims have come in the form of audio or video tapes made available on Islamic Web sites or sent to Arabic satellite television stations.

An editor at the newspaper said that the letter was received via e-mail Wednesday, a day after the date written on it, and that the paper intended to publish it in its Thursday edition.

“I believe it is credible. Several times they issued statements about something

which proved correct” editor-in-chief Abdel Bari Atwan told the AP in a telephone interview.

Atwan, also publisher of Al-Quds Al-Arabi, had interviewed bin Laden well before Sept. 11, 2001, and has since then claimed to have received al-Qaida statements. He has defended bin Laden and Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein on Arab television.

An expert on Islamic militant groups and a former leader of an Islamic militant group also told AP they believe the letter was authentic.

“I was almost certain that they were going to issue a denial swiftly,” said Dia’a Rashwan, an analyst with Egypt’s Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies.

Reached in London, a former leader of the outlawed Egyptian group Islamic Jihad, Hani el-Sibaie, said the statement matched al-Qaida prose.

The letter spelled out that al-Qaida has clear objectives: “We strike at American Crusaders, their allies and the Iraqi police, stooges of the Americans and the instrument America uses to strike the holy warriors in Iraq. We



AP
An injured Iraqi is treated after a stone-throwing mob attacked U.S. forces outside Camp Bonzai in Baghdad Tuesday, March 2, 2004, as smoke rises from the base entrance.

US: Iraq extremists signal danger period

WASHINGTON (AP)—Americans can expect more casualties in Iraq as extremists try to derail the transfer of authority and security responsibilities to a new government, the commander of coalition troops said Wednesday.

“This is going to be a dangerous period that we move toward, there’s no doubt about it,” said Gen. John Abizaid, head of U.S. Central Command.

“The extremists on either end of the spectrum ... will move very hard to derail this effort,” continuing to target American occupiers and the Iraqis working with them.

Abizaid told reporters after his appearance before the House Armed Services Committee that he believes “there is no doubt” that Jordanian militant Abu

Musab al-Zarqawi was behind a series of suicide bombings Tuesday in Iraq against pilgrims.

“The level of organization and the desire to cause casualties among innocent worshippers is a clear hallmark of the Zarqawi network and we have intelligence that ties Zarqawi to this attack,” Abizaid said.

The general was asked by several lawmakers to explain what he expects in the planned June 30 handover of sovereignty to a transitional Iraqi government, how perilous the period might be and whether there is a likelihood the country could dissolve into a civil war as the transition unfolds.

He said “civil war is possible” if there are missteps by Iraqi political leaders or because extremists and outside fighters

are trying to foment it.

“While I say it is possible, I do not believe it is probable,” Abizaid said. “I think there is a much greater chance that Iraq will emerge through this political process as a stable and modern state.”

Abizaid said he is “optimistic that we have a chance, but it is not a 100 percent chance” of success.

Americans must have patience and stay the course in Iraq, where progress toward rebuilding has been “absolutely incredible,” Abizaid said in the appearance with Peter Rodman, assistant defense secretary for international affairs.

“The real story is not that there are people trying to derail this process,” Rodman said. “The real story is that this process is moving forward regardless.”

strike American stooges in the infidel (Iraqi) governing council and those who work with them, whether Sunnis or Shiites.”

The letter said al-Qaida doesn’t kill innocent people “except in carrying out justice” against those who don’t share its beliefs, in what was a clear reference to Shiite Muslims.

Iraqi clerics and politicians, Shiite and Sunni alike, have characterized the attacks as al-Qaida attempts at sparking a sectarian war.

American forces have intelligence connecting the bombings to Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a militant also linked to al-Qaida, the U.S. military commander in the

Middle East said Wednesday.

“The level of organization and the desire to cause casualties among innocent worshippers is a clear hallmark of the Zarqawi network and we have intelligence that ties Zarqawi to this attack,” Gen. John Abizaid, head of the U.S. Central Command, told a Congressional committee.

jama

Sunni clerics, Shiites unite after attack

By **HAMZA HENDAWI**
AP WRITER

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP)—Shiite clerics joined Sunni preachers in a march of thousands of mostly black-clad men Wednesday, trying to keep sectarian passions in check after a horrific attack on Shiite pilgrims that raised fears of civil war.

U.S. and Iraqi officials disagreed over how many people died in Tuesday’s bombings in Baghdad and Karbala—the deadliest here since the fall of Saddam Hussein. The Iraqi Governing Council said 271 people were killed. U.S. officials put the toll at 117.

On Thursday, a U.S. Army

spokesman said a rocket struck the green zone where the headquarters of U.S.-led occupation authority is located after five large explosions rumbled through the center of the capital late Wednesday. No one was injured and no damage was reported.

Tuesday’s attacks—at some of the holiest shrines of Shiite Islam and on the most sacred day in the Shiite calendar—threatened to turn Shiites against Sunnis if the bombers were found to have been Iraqi Sunni extremists.

But strife with the country’s Sunni minority would hardly be in the interests of the Shiites, who stand on the verge of

achieving their dream of real political power after generations of suppression. Civil war would threaten those dreams, and the community’s influential clergy appeared eager to keep passions in check.

No group claimed responsibility for Tuesday’s attacks. However, the top U.S. commander in the Middle East, Gen. John Abizaid, said Wednesday the United States has evidence that al-Qaida-linked Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was behind the bombings.

U.S. officials said 15 people were detained in Karbala in connection with the attacks, though none was charged. Among those detained were five

Farsi speakers, a suggestion that they were Iranians. About 100,000 Iranians were believed to have come to Iraq for the Ashoura religious rituals, and Iran’s news agency said 23 Iranians were among the dead.

In what appeared to be a nod to criticism from Iraq’s top Shiite cleric, U.S. administrator L. Paul Bremer said the coalition would help strengthen border security, saying it was “increasingly apparent” that “a large part of terrorism” comes from outside Iraq.

Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani and other Shiite leaders accused the coalition of failing to provide adequate security

for the worshippers and of not doing enough to prevent extremists from crossing Iraq’s porous borders.

“There are 8,000 border police on duty today and more are on the way,” Bremer said. “We are adding hundreds of vehicles and doubling border police staffing in selected areas. The United States has committed \$60 million to support border security.”

In an attempt to play down sectarian divisions, Shiite Muslim clerics and Sunni preachers led thousands in a march from a Shiite suburb in eastern Baghdad to the Kazimiya district where the bombings in the capital took place.

“We and our Sunni countrymen are, have been and always will be, brothers,” said Shiite preacher Amer al-Hussein, a senior aide to firebrand cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, an outspoken opponent of the U.S.-led occupation.

Members of the U.S.-appointed Iraqi Governing Council also stressed the need for unity between Shiites and Sunnis.

“It was a crime directed not only against Shiites, or Islam, but against humanity,” said Ibrahim al-Jaafari, a prominent Shiite council member. “Anyone who kills a Sunni is against the spirit of Shiism. And anyone who kills a Shiite is against the spirit of Sunnism,” he said.

French pass headscarves ban

PARIS (AP)—A law banning Islamic headscarves in France’s public schools was overwhelmingly adopted Wednesday in the Senate despite protests by many French Muslims that the measure is discriminatory.

The 276-20 vote mirrored similar support by the National Assembly, the lower chamber of parliament, which passed it 494-36 on Feb. 10.

President Jacques Chirac must now formally sign it into law within 15 days. He had said such a law was needed to protect the French principle of secularism.

The law forbids religious apparel and signs that “conspicuously show” a student’s religious affiliation. While Jewish skullcaps and large Christian crosses would also be banned, authorities have made clear that it is aimed at removing Islamic headscarves from classrooms.

The measure is to take effect with the start of the new school year in September.

There are an estimated 5 million Muslims in mostly Roman Catholic France—the

largest Muslim population in Western Europe.

There was never any doubt the measure would be passed.

The Senate, which like the lower house is controlled by conservatives such as Chirac, still had to dismiss 23 proposed amendments raised in two days of debate. The amendments were offered mainly by the left.

The law is to be re-examined after a year in force to see whether “conspicuous” should be replaced by “visible.”

The opposition Socialists had argued during the lower house debate that “visible” is a less-ambiguous term that would make the law easier to apply.

The proposal has triggered demonstrations from Muslims around the world.

It even drew a reaction by a man identified as a top lieutenant of Osama bin Laden. An audiotope aired Feb. 24 attributed to Ayman al-Zawahri said the French measure “is another example of the Crusader’s malice, which Westerns have against Muslims.”

5 Russian soldiers killed in Chechnya

VLADIKAVKAZ, Russia (AP)—Rebel attacks and land mines killed five Russian soldiers in Chechnya over the previous day, an official in the Moscow-backed Chechen administration said Wednesday.

Three of the Russian soldiers were killed and another five were wounded as federal outposts came under rebels’ fire 20 times, the official said on condition of anonymity.

Two others were killed and one wounded in two separate land mine explosions, he said.

On Wednesday, the top federal military commander in Chechnya said up to 80 guerrilla units are still operating in Chechnya, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported.

Col-Gen. Valery Baranov also warned of possible attacks on polling stations before or during the presidential elections

on March 14, the agency said.

In political developments, Chechnya’s Kremlin-backed leader Akhmad Kadyrov announced that Chechen Prime Minister Anatoly Popov would be replaced, news agencies reported. Popov was medically evacuated five months ago after what some claim was an attempt to poison him. He has not returned to Chechnya.

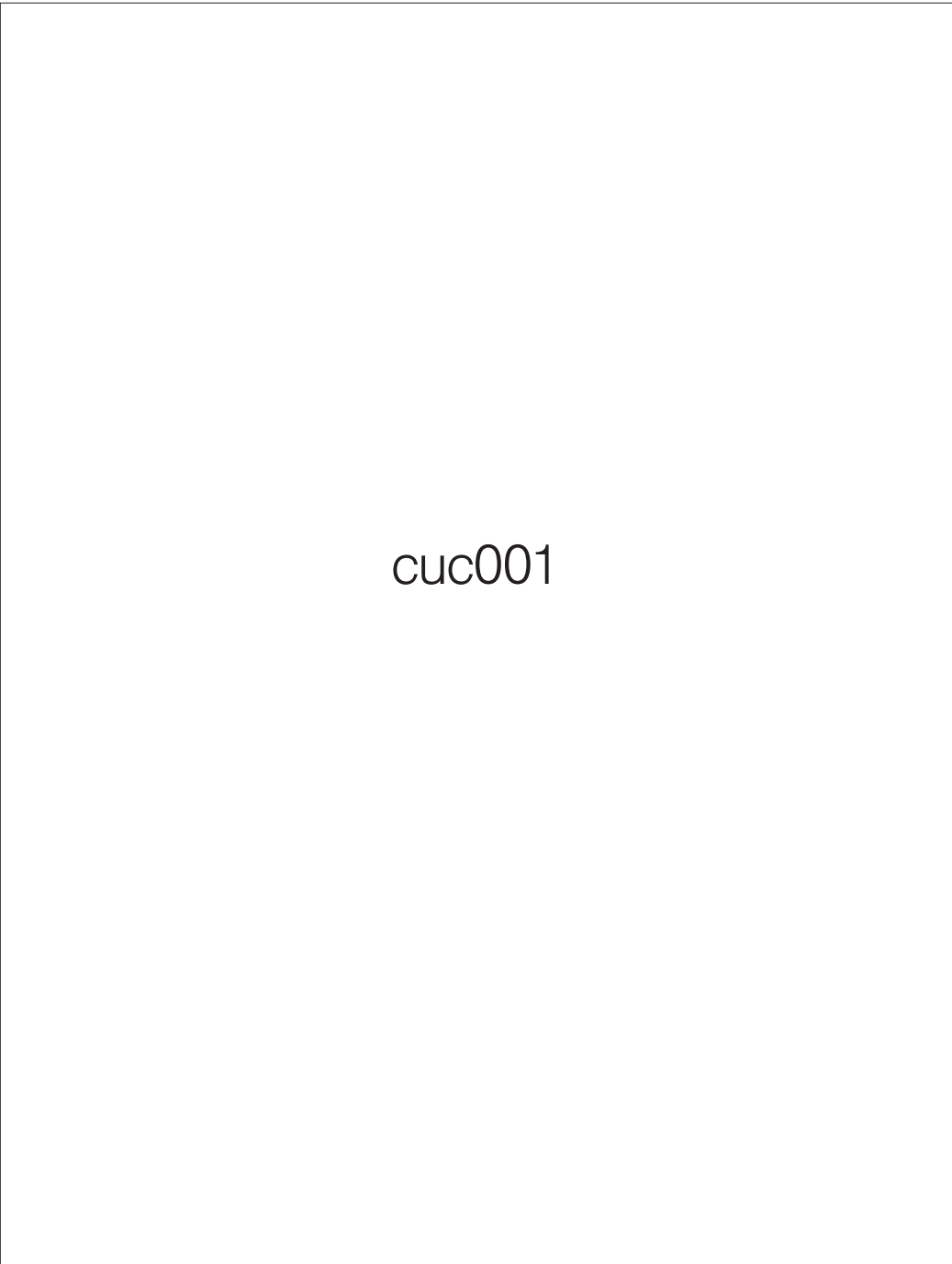
Russia’s first, 20-month war with Chechen separatists ended in the troops’ withdrawal in 1996, leaving Chechnya de-facto independent and largely lawless.

The Kremlin sent troops back into Chechnya in September 1999, after Chechnya-based fighters made incursions into neighboring Dagestan and after some 300 people died in apartment bombings blamed by officials on the insurgents.

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Science & Technology

Life & Style



Life & Style

The case of the new Nancy Drew

By AILEEN JACOBSON
NEWSDAY

Oh, Nancy, you are so cool now. You drive a hybrid car. You're captain of your team in the River Heights Biking for Bucks charity race. You and your boyfriend, Ned, are taking flying lessons. You're starring in a series of CD-ROM games, and soon you'll move to the big screen in a Warner Brothers movie. Your picture is on handbags and pajamas. And now you're writing your own books! Pretty good for a 74-year-old girl detective.

Actually, Nancy Drew is not writing her own books. Neither is Carolyn Keene, the authorial name that has been on the cover of the scores of Drew detective novels written—by dozens of authors—since the series launched in 1930.

But now the iconic franchise is being relaunched by publisher Simon & Schuster—complete with related licensing ventures—and one of the major changes is that the stories are told in snappy, up-to-date first person.

When last encountered, in November's "Werewolf in a Winter Wonderland," Nancy Drew 175, the slender blond

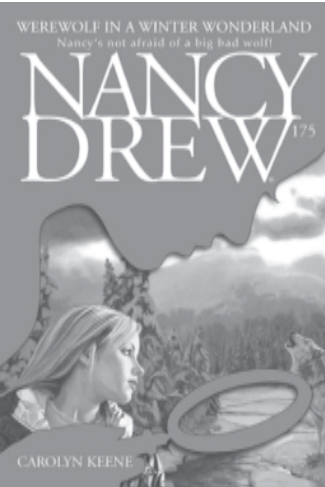
sleuth's story was related by an omniscient narrator, as were the 174 previous installments (and their spinoffs, including the separate "Nancy Drew Notebooks" started in 1994 and aimed at younger readers, in which Nancy and her pals are third-graders).

Back then, Nancy was driving a blue Mustang, and she was 18 (up from 16 in the earliest books, though those were later revised).

Now, miraculously, Nancy is 17, and inhabiting a world embroidered with more details about the people and history of suburban River Heights than ever before.

"The kids who read Nancy Drew also listen to Britney Spears. That's one reason we wanted to make Nancy cooler and more contemporary," says Ellen Krieger, Simon & Schuster vice president and associate publisher of paperback books.

But don't expect anything racy. Middle school readers—ages 8 to 12—are "schizoid," she says, "wanting to grow up but wanting the security of childhood. Nancy Drew appeals to that second stream for tweens. ... She has the same values (as before), but in a voice



that's hipper, that will appeal to today's kids."

In the old series, "Nancy's new white ski suit showed off her slim body, and she was happy to find out that it also kept her warm and comfortable... ." This year, Nancy finds herself "suddenly a strawberry-blond version of the Tasmanian devil, whirling around the room pulling myself together," grabbing a blouse and tight skirt.

The first-person narrative is an important part of the change, says Krieger. "It allows the reader to be closer to Nancy. She can see things through Nancy's eyes."

The publisher hired an

author, Bonnie Bryant, to write a new "bible" for the series. A "bible," common for such series, gives background for the books' writers so details stay consistent. Bryant "fleshed out the characters a bit and made them more multidimensional. She fleshed out the setting, too. Suddenly River Heights has a history, local color and local characters. It's a much more fully defined world."

Three writers wrote the first

six books, which were outlined by Bryant, says associate editor Jennifer Weiss.

Among the subtle changes is a decreased focus on the weight problem that Nancy's pal, Bess, has struggled with in previous books. And Bess' female cousin, George, still a tomboy, now "is a computer gal. She can hack into stuff."

Ned, Nancy's faithful boyfriend, stays as gentlemanly as ever. And the plots remain murder-free.

The relaunch comes just in time for Nancy's 75th birthday next year and for the "girl power" movement, says brand manager Robb Pearlman. The market for the books, games and accessories—as well as the film and an upcoming graphic novel—reaches beyond tweens to "their grandmothers, mothers and aunts." A Web-based fan club, www.nancydrewsleuth.com, will hold its fourth annual convention this month, he adds.

BOOK REVIEW

The Strange Case of the Walking Corpse

"A Chronicle of Medical Mysteries, Curious Remedies, and Bizarre but True Healing Folklore," by Nancy Butcher

Reviewed by MICHAEL PAKENHAM
THE BALTIMORE SUN

Nancy Butcher, an experienced medical writer, has plodded and poked through hundreds of medical texts, arcane encyclopedias, journal articles, Web sites, government publications and historic curiosities to pull together this

enchanting—if often disturbing—cornucopia of weird physiological phenomena. Yes, there is a recorded syndrome called "walking corpse"—also designated as Cotard Syndrome, delusional nihilism and other quaint manners of describing the affliction that leaves sufferers convinced that they are, in fact, dead. It is far from the most bizarre disease Butcher has catalogued. Most emphatically, this is not a home-remedy text, but, rather, an entertainment. But for the troubled or more curious, the chapter notes and bibliography are unusually inclusive. A delight for the mildly hypochondriac.

pss

God works in mysterious ways

Although I think I look pretty good in black, I've never seriously thought about joining the clergy.

I've thought about being Johnny Cash from time to time, but never a man of the cloth.

So I was understandably surprised when an e-mail arrived inviting me to be ordained.

At first I thought Mel Gibson might have been behind it.

Mel's got that new movie out - I haven't seen it, but I hear it's kind of like "Good Friday the 13th" - and he's been looking for publicity.

But it wasn't Mel.

Then I thought, hey, maybe it was God.

I know this sounds a bit egocentric, but I figured if God helped Mel direct a movie, he might at least e-mail me.

It wasn't God either, though.

I was able to make this determination by checking the e-mail provider. God may work in strange ways, but no way is he going to use Yahoo.

Eventually, I was able to ascertain that my ordination offer came from Minister Charles Simpson of Aruba.

Mind you, Minister Charles Simpson of Aruba is no Mel Gibson, but he is not a man lacking in divine juice, chief among it being the power to make someone like me an "official minister" in just 48 hours.

I was impressed but suspicious.

I mean, don't ministers usually have to spend years studying theology? And isn't it kind of important to have the deep, abiding faith thing going for you? And shouldn't you be the kind of person that others can look up to and respect?

Another thing that made me wary were some of the side benefits Minister Charles Simpson of Aruba touted in his communication.

By JIM SHEA
The Hartford Courant

Jim Shea can be reached
at shea@courant.com.



For example:
"Weddings: Marry your brother, sister or best friend."

Now, I'm not so naive as to believe there aren't places where this particular power might be a selling point, but around here, we tend to shy away from these types of relationships because they're just too confusing.

"Baptisms: You can say, 'Welcome to the world! I am your minister and your uncle!'"

Of course, if you are married to your sister or brother, you can also say, "Welcome to the world! I am your minister and your uncle - and your father."

Although Minister Charles Simpson of Aruba's offer is not without its flaws, there is no question that it is a good deal.

For just \$29.95, you get a "Proof of Minister certification in your name" along with an 8- by 10-inch certificate "in color, with gold seal ... printed by an ink press."

Wow!
But that's not all. After you get ordained, Minister Charles Simpson of Aruba says you can start your own church.

I know exactly what I'm going to call mine:
The First Church of the Perpetual Collection Plate.

Can I have an amen?

WALLACE

Hygienist disgusted by clients who don't brush before visits

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: I'm a dental hygienist. It's an excellent career, and I've been practicing for nine years.

For the life of me, I cannot understand why so many people get into my chair and tell me they haven't brushed their teeth all day. Even worse, they'll say, "I just ate a roast beef sandwich, so you might find some chunks in there." It's disgusting.

Abby, how can I let people know they should brush their teeth before visiting a dental office?

GROSSED OUT IN GROSSE POINT

DEAR GROSSED OUT: People already know they should have brushed their teeth before visiting you. Make it a practice to ask your patients when they arrive whether they have "had a chance" to brush their teeth. If the answer is no, smile, hand them a toothbrush and toothpaste, and tell them to go do it. At first, they may be taken aback, but it won't take them long to get used to the new drill.

DEAR ABBY: My husband started working the graveyard shift two months ago. It has been a hard transition for us, but even harder for our 11-year-old son, "Ryan."

For the past couple of weeks, Ryan has been overly concerned about someone breaking into our third-floor apartment while we're asleep. I've tried my best to reassure Ryan, but he keeps having nightmares about someone breaking into our place—or my parents' apartment—and harming or killing us. He wakes up screaming and crying.

Do you have any suggestions about how I can make him feel more secure?

SLEEPLESS IN NEW WESTMINSTER

DEAR SLEEPLESS: It would be helpful to know what triggered your son's insecurity. Is he watching too much television? Is he playing violent video games? Has something happened at school or afterward that he is not telling you? Talk to your son. If the problem persists, take him to his pediatrician for evaluation—and a referral to a psychologist, if necessary.

DEAR ABBY: I am a 47-year-old woman with a new (unplanned) baby. Despite my husband's initial reservations, we both consider her a welcome addition to our lives.

We also have three older children, 25, 21 and 18. My doctor says I need time to adjust to all the recent changes in my life, but I believe there's a bigger problem.

Ever since the baby arrived, I have been overwhelmed with fear about aging. This is completely out of character. Some days, I can't even leave the house. I find myself pushing my husband away and neglecting the needs of the rest of my family. The only one getting the best of me is the baby.

My husband thinks I'm trying to do too much, that I should stop breast-feeding, get help around the house and "snap out of it."

My inability to communicate and be intimate with him is causing problems between us, and they are affecting the rest of our family. My husband has always been my best friend, but he can't understand how I feel these days.

I don't know how to climb out of this hole or what to do. Help!

TRYING TO DO TOO MUCH

DEAR TRYING: Tell your doctor exactly what you have told me. You may be suffering from postpartum depression caused by hormone changes following childbirth. Please don't wait. Do it now.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

What teens need to know about sex, drugs, AIDS, and getting along with peers and parents is in "What Every Teen Should Know." To order, send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$5 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby, Teen Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included.)



Dear Abby

Abductors of Thalia's sisters captured

MEXICO CITY (AP)—Police have captured 11 men suspected of involvement in the kidnapping of pop singer Thalia's two sisters, prosecutors said Wednesday.

Mexican actress Laura

Zapata and her sister, writer Ernestina Sodi, identified several of the men as their captors, said Mexico State Attorney General Alfonso Navarrete Prida.

The men were captured

earlier this week in a house on the outskirts of Mexico City.

Zapata and Sodi were abducted from their car in 2002 after Zapata appeared in a play. The sisters were released weeks

later. Zapata has indicated that her family paid a ransom but hasn't disclosed the amount.

Thalia, a former Mexican soap opera actress, is married to music mogul Tommy Mottola.

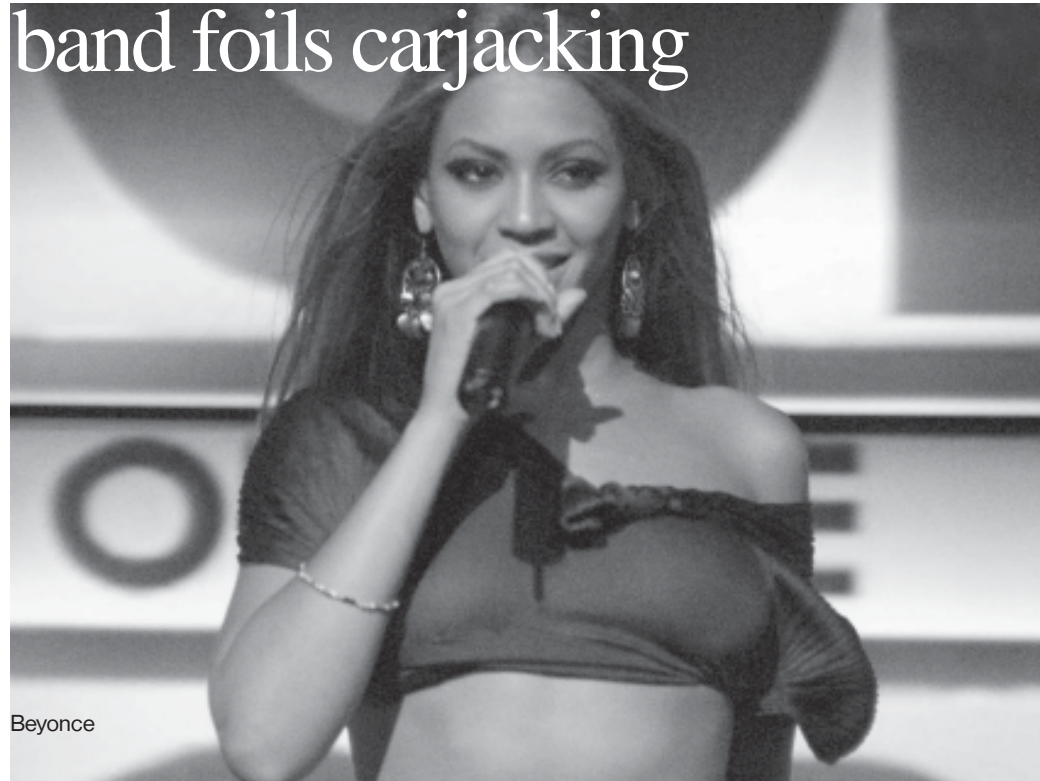
Beyonce's band foils carjacking

PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Singer Beyonce's band came to the aid of a 91-year-old driver, chasing and holding down a suspected carjacker.

Police said Reynold Caleen, a great-grandfather of nine, tried to fight off a knife-wielding suspect when he grabbed the elderly man's wallet in the parking lot of a Walgreen's store Tuesday—knocking the suspect's knife out of his hands and kicking him several times as the pair wrestled to the ground.

Lead guitarist Shaun Carrington, bass guitarist Kern Brantley and drummer Nisan Stewart, in town to rehearse for a tour with the singer, pulled in front of the suspected carjacker as he tried to drive the elderly man's car out of the parking lot—and chased him on foot when he got out and ran.

A Walgreen's employee tackled the suspect; the bandmates held him down



Beyonce

until police arrived. "Gotta protect society as much as we can, you know?" Stewart told WSVN-TV.

Caleen's wife, Faye, confessed

the couple never heard of Beyonce. "We're more of the John Wayne generation," she said.

The suspect was charged with armed carjacking and

battery of a person over 65, a felony in Florida.

Beyonce's 22-city tour with Alicia Keys and Missy Elliott begins March 12.

Maria Shriver has federal jury duty



Maria Shriver, wife of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, attends a luncheon held in her honor in Sacramento, Calif., Dec. 9, 2003.

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Journalist-turned-California first lady Maria Shriver has another new job: juror.

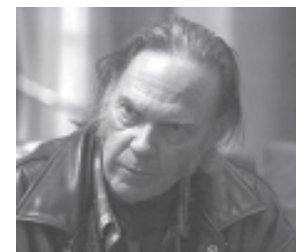
Shriver, wearing a pantsuit and reading glasses, took notes Wednesday in U.S. District Court, where she is on a jury hearing a product liability case.

There was no evidence of extra security for the wife of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. Everyone entering the federal courthouse must pass through a metal detector and each courtroom has an armed bailiff.

Shriver, a former "Dateline NBC" reporter, asked to be relieved of her duties at NBC News after her husband was elected governor. She said it became clear to her that as first lady of California, her journalistic integrity would constantly be scrutinized.

Shriver had the seat nearest the witness stand. She is one of three women on the panel hearing the case of a man who claims he suffered nerve damage that cost him the use of his right arm when he fell from an extension ladder while working for a heating and cooling company.

He is suing the ladder manufacturer, alleging the product was defective.



AP
Musician Neil Young during an interview at the Pfister Hotel Tuesday in Milwaukee.

Neil Young's tour is earth-friendly

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Saving the family farm, helping the Earth and reducing America's dependence on foreign oil—they all go together for Neil Young on his "Greendale" tour.

Young rolled into town with a fleet of buses and trucks running on biodiesel, an environmentally friendly fuel made from renewable resources such as soybean oil and recycled cooking oil. He said switching to biodiesel was his idea.

"Rather than talk about it, I figured just do it," Young said, noting there's an environmentalist character in his new show, which features actors performing on stage along with the music.

In an interview Tuesday with The Associated Press, the veteran Canadian rocker said he can still be a capitalist and embrace the environment.

"I'm just trying to make a point. There are other ways to be self-sustaining," the 58-year-old said.

Mammoth Michael Jackson collection sold

ASBURY PARK, N.J. (AP)—A mammoth collection of stage costumes, photographs, documents and props belonging to Michael Jackson and his famous family was loaded into shipping containers Wednesday after spending 18 months under wraps in this gritty shore city.

The collection, whose seller contends it is the largest accumulation of Jackson memorabilia in the world, is to be shipped to a European buyer. Henry V. Vaccaro Sr. declined to name the buyer or the price he paid, but said the man intended to display the collection in Europe and Japan.

Vaccaro, 63, of Interlaken, acquired the collection after nine years of legal wrangling with the Jackson family. He said a company formed by the Jacksons had agreed to buy his Neptune N.J.-based Kramer Guitar Co. in 1992, but then defaulted on \$1.4 million in payments the next year.

Vaccaro ultimately acquired the collection after paying off a storage and shipping bill owed by the Jackson family to an Oxnard, Calif., warehouse, he said.

Calls to spokesmen for Michael Jackson and for the Jackson family were not returned Wednesday.

Since the collection arrived in New Jersey in 2002, Vaccaro has been busy cataloguing and photographing it, and said he had two different experts authenticate its contents. He said dozens of buyers viewed the collection, which filled a 6,000-square-foot room.

Now that it's sold, "I don't know what I'm going to do with myself," said Vaccaro, who runs a construction company.

People curious about the collection will be able to view it, for a fee, through a new Web site called www.jacksonvault.com, which Vaccaro said would go online Wednesday night.

Pastimes

WONDERWORD By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD. The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

MICROWAVE OVENS Solution: 9 letters

C A C K F E M O H K K C A R S
C R T I A K L I M O T T O B
R O E A T S T P N B A K E A
E E N T E S C T T O A A M C O
C D T V T H A A E P W I C P P
U Y O A E U I L P R N E T O E
A B A N W N B L P U S I R E N
S S U R E A I E T S O E L R T
R L A R T A L E O N C E O S T
E P I N N A S R N I C C A S I
M S R C T S I O P T P O O S A
I U R E I E E T E R O R R V P W
T S G S S T C I P I F A P E A
L I O B U O C I R E C L T T R
D C O B S R O O D L Y E E S M

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Accessories, Appliances, Apply, Bacon, Bake, Boil, Bottom, Burn, Butter, Button, Cobs, Container, Convenient, Cook, Cover, Defrost, Dice, Digital, Done, Door, Electric, Faster, Heat, Home, Kitchen, Milk, Minutes, Open, Option, Plastic, Popcorn, Power, Rack, Recipe, Rice, Roast, Sauce, Slice, Start, Steps, Stir, Time, Tray, Turntable, Uses, Wait, Warm, Water, Wrap.
Yesterday's Answer: Confident
NOTE: Postage and handling charges have changed for The Colossal Wonderword. Add \$5 for the first book ordered, \$1 more for each additional book. Volume 17 and 18 are \$5 each, available to Universal Press Syndicate, 4825 Main St., Kansas City, Mo. 64111 or call toll-free 1-800-255-6734, ext. 6013.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Tray contents
4 Porcine parents
8 Use a kiln
12 Miss Piggy's pronoun
13 Drudgery
14 Wading bird
15 Highly excited
17 Iodine source
18 Recede for one
19 Crystal, for one
20 Ignite
22 "— See for Miles"
24 Choir voice
25 Quite quickly
29 "Bravo!"
30 Ghana's capital
31 Prior to
32 Lined up
34 Hemsley sitcom
35 Internet addresses
36 Sends forth

37 "West Side Story" song
40 Cereal choice
41 Exam format
42 Soon
46 Scooted
47 Hero's home?
48 "Sesame Street" Muppet
49 Loses rigidity
50 Spotted
51 Continental abbr.

3 Long-fellow subject
4 Offend olfactorily
5 Leak slowly
6 Whom to "ease on down the road" to see
7 Crafty
8 Marshall Islands atoll
9 The third man
10 Slay
11 Catch sight of
16 Poi base
19 Mexican peninsula, familiarly

20 Ganges garment
21 Blueprint
22 Ear bone
23 Give a darn
25 Reykjavik's land (Abbr.)
26 Render womanly
27 Worry
28 Longings
30 Emanation
33 Bee products?
34 Asian nurse
36 Gen. Rommel
37 Tackles the lawn
38 Neighborhood
39 Resounded
40 Hoedown seating
42 Picks out of a lineup
43 Born Bud's partner
45 Always

DOWN

1 "— Blue?"
2 Trinity member

Solution time: 25 mins.

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER 2-20

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
12 13 14
15 16 17
18 19
20 21 22 23
24 25 26 27 28
29 30 31
32 33 34
35 36
37 38 39 40
41 42 43 44 45
46 47 48
49 50 51

STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY
Cindy Crawford, Andrew Shue, Brian Littrell, Ivana Trump

HAPPY BIRTHDAY: You may be sidetracked by an emotional problem that has been hanging over your head. Rid yourself of past issues so you can move forward. Change is in the offing, so clear your concerns. The turn of events will be much greater than even you can imagine. Your numbers are 6, 17, 22, 35, 41, 44

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ARIES (March 21-April 19)
Regardless of what you had planned on getting done today, you will find it difficult. Nothing will be as it appears. Make your own decisions if you want to be happy with the outcome. ***

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
Don't give in to the demands being put on you. You are right and you must not doubt yourself for even one minute. Patience will pay off big time. ****

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
Put your time and effort into learning something new rather than trying to convince everyone to do things your way. Someone will try to meddle in your affairs, which could break a long-time friendship. **

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
You will be in the mood to get things done, so don't waste time. Join groups that can offer you as much as you can offer them. Relationships developed today will be satisfying. *****

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
Go back over your personal papers to guarantee the tax breaks to which you're entitled. Make adjustments that will lead to a higher income or better return on your money. ***

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
Listen to the grievances of both your business and emotional partner. You can make a difference and build a strong alliance if you are patient. Don't let your own emotions get in the way. ***

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
It's time to center yourself and determine what will make you feel the most relaxed. Once you have mastered a state of calm, you will be able to perform your duties with excellence. ***

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
Love relationships will develop if you are single. If you are in a relationship, you can certainly rekindle the flame. You will develop an idea you have wanted to pursue for some time now. *****

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
Not everything will be as it appears today. Don't trust what you are told. Someone will be leaving out some vital information that could make a difference to the choices you make. **

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
Conversations will be packed full of new thoughts and ideas today. It's time for you to follow your heart and your dreams. *****

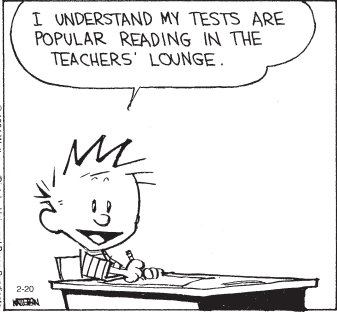
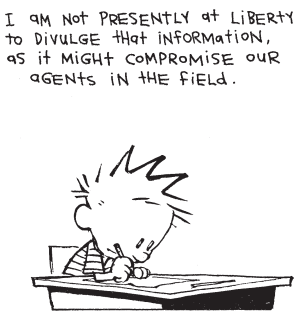
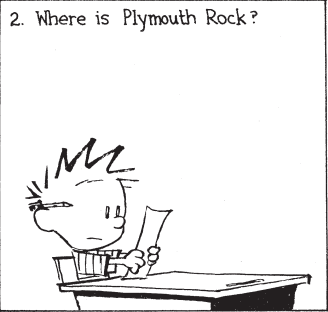
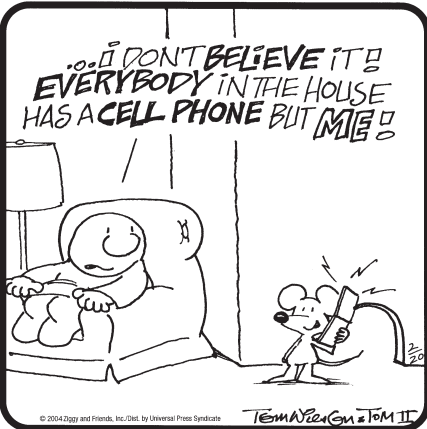
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
If you want to make a work change, this is probably the time. Don't waste time procrastinating — set your goals high and shoot for the stars. ***

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
You may be feeling a little stressed out today. It may be time to backtrack and readdress what it is you are willing to do so you can move forward. **

BIRTHDAY BABY: You are sensitive and can get what you want by using emotional tactics. You are influential, intuitive and can make things happen. You have a vivid imagination and creative talent.

(Need advice? Check out Eugenia on the Web at www.astroadvice.com or www.eugenialast.com.)

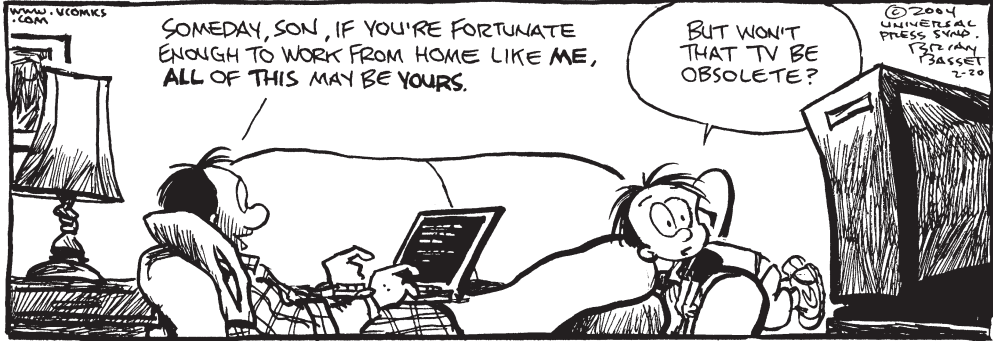
Ziggy



Garfield



Adam@home



The Duplex



By Glenn McCoy

Pastimes



NBA STANDINGS					
EASTERN CONFERENCE					
Atlantic Division					
	W	L	Pct	G	
New Jersey	39	25	.609	-	
Philadelphia	37	26	.587	1 1/2	
Boston	37	27	.578	2	
Orlando	33	33	.500	7	
Washington	31	33	.484	8	
New York	28	36	.438	11	
Miami	21	43	.328	18	
Central Division					
Detroit	40	23	.635	-	
Indiana	38	27	.585	3	
New Orleans	37	29	.561	4 1/2	
Milwaukee	32	33	.492	9	
Atlanta	26	39	.400	15	
Chicago	23	43	.348	18 1/2	
Toronto	20	42	.323	19 1/2	
Cleveland	11	53	.172	29 1/2	
WESTERN CONFERENCE					
Midwest Division					
Dallas	48	15	.762	-	
San Antonio	45	18	.714	3	
Minnesota	42	25	.627	8	
Utah	37	27	.578	11 1/2	
Houston	33	30	.524	15	
Memphis	23	41	.359	25 1/2	
Denver	14	51	.215	35	
Pacific Division					
Sacramento	45	19	.703	-	
Portland	42	22	.656	3	
L.A. Lakers	35	28	.556	9 1/2	
Phoenix	33	30	.524	11 1/2	
Golden State	31	33	.484	14	
Seattle	28	34	.452	16	
L.A. Clippers	20	44	.313	25	

NBA STANDINGS		
EASTERN CONFERENCE		
Atlantic Division		
Team	W	L
New Jersey	31	14
Boston	26	19
Philadelphia	24	22
Orlando	24	23
Washington	22	24
New York	19	25
Miami	16	29
Central Division		
Indiana	33	13
Detroit	29	15
New Orleans	24	22
Milwaukee	22	22
Chicago	17	28
Atlanta	17	29
Toronto	11	34
Cleveland	9	37
WESTERN CONFERENCE		
Midwest Division		
Dallas	35	9
San Antonio	29	16
Minnesota	27	18
Utah	27	18
Houston	24	20
Memphis	13	31
Denver	10	35
Pacific Division		
Sacramento	32	14
Portland	28	16
Phoenix	26	21
L.A. Lakers	20	23
Seattle	20	23
Golden State	20	24
L.A. Clippers	17	28

NBA STANDINGS		
EASTERN CONFERENCE		
Atlantic Division		
Orlando	2	0
New Jersey	1	0
Philadelphia	1	1
Boston	0	1
Miami	0	1
New York	0	1
Washington	0	1
Central Division		
Chicago	1	0
Detroit	1	0
Indiana	1	0
Toronto	1	0
New Orleans	0	0
Atlanta	0	1
Cleveland	0	1
Milwaukee	0	1
WESTERN CONFERENCE		
Midwest Division		
Dallas	1	0
Minnesota	1	0
San Antonio	1	0
Utah	0	0
Denver	0	1
Houston	0	1
Memphis	0	1
Pacific Division		
Sacramento	1	0
Portland	1	0
Golden State	0	0
L.A. Clippers	0	0
Phoenix	0	0
Seattle	0	0
L.A. Lakers	0	2
Wednesday's Games		
Chicago 99, Boston 96		
Indiana 91, Houston 82		
Toronto 74, Washington 68		
Philadelphia 95, Milwaukee 93		
Orlando 100, Miami 86		
New Jersey 105, Atlanta 94		
Dallas 119, Memphis 108		
Minnesota 83, Denver 77		
Detroit 86, New York 77		
Portland 102, L.A. Lakers 90		

Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	T
Giants	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	-	3	
Hustlers	1	0	1	4	2	0	0	5	-	13



SPORTS BRIEFS



Spurs defeat Mavericks, 111-104

Tony Parker scored a career-high 32 points, including seven free throws in the final minute, to lead the San Antonio Spurs to a 111-104 win over the division rival Dallas Mavericks on Wednesday night.

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

Yearend RGA champion tourney tomorrow

The Refaluwasch Golf Association will hold their yearend Club Champion Tournament tomorrow, December 14, at the Lao Lao West golf course.

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